

Quebec Farmers' Advocate



Vol. 45, No. 11 – December 2025

Publication Mail No.: 40033773

WHAT'S INSIDE

Greenhouse growers push back on carbon tax
Page 4

Maple producers miffed over broken deal
Page 4

Quebecers named Outstanding Young Farmers
Page 5

Another rabies outbreak
Page 11

Keeping it in the family – generation after generation
Page 9

'This one gets me. Premier Legault references a statistic that says that 43 per cent of Montrealers speak only French at home. So, for him, if at home you speak French and Spanish, French and Ukrainian or French and English, you are a problem. Teaching your mother tongue to your kids is a problem? In what world?'

— Liberal MNA for Pontiac
André Fortin on Dec. 3



DENYS KURBATOV/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The average Canadian family of four is estimated to spend \$17,571 on groceries in 2026, according to researchers.

Food prices to jump 4 to 6% in 2026

Family of 4 to spend about \$1,000 more

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

Food prices in Canada could jump by 4 to 6 per cent in 2026, according to the latest figures compile by researchers at Dalhousie University.

The annual grocery bill for a family of four will be close to \$1,000 more in 2026, bringing the total to \$17,571.79, predict the university researchers who have compiled Canada's Food Price Report 2026 released earlier this month. The expected increase will be largely driven by meat prices, which are expected to jump 5 to 7 per cent.

In addition, food prices in Quebec, along with Ontario, Alberta, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, will see increases above the national average. Increases in prices in British Columbia and Manitoba are expected

to be below the national average. The report, however, does not quantify the provincial increases, stating only: "The estimates offer important guidance for policy-makers and consumers by highlighting emerging regional pressures and potential affordability challenges across the country."

"Food prices are 27-per-cent higher than they were five years ago," states the report, which has been released for the past 16 years.

Food price increases in 2026 will largely be driven by jumps in the cost of meat, the authors claim, with beef expected to get more expensive. It is estimated beef prices will see another 7 per cent hike as the size of cattle herds continue to shrink and more beef producers leave the industry.

See **FOOD PRICES**, Page 20.

Canadian farmers should have minimum \$50,000 income

National group proposes pilot project to provide producers with 'income floor'

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

A nationwide push is under way by the National Farmers Union to secure a guaranteed annual income for Canadian producers – a policy move advocates say is essential to stabilize farm operations and safeguarding rural communities in Canada.

At its recent annual convention in Moncton, the NFU – a national non-profit organization that advocates for farmers and enhancing rural communities – tabled a plan for a 10-year pilot program that would provide farmers with a minimum income of \$50,000 per year, indexed to inflation. Under the proposal, that guaranteed amount would serve as an income floor rather than a replacement for existing agricultural support programs.

"Farmers need an income floor," said Phil Mount, the NFU's vice-president of policy. "High land prices, equipment costs, volatile markets, unpredictable weather – all of these combine to make farming extremely precarious right now. One setback can push someone off the land. That isn't sustainable."

Mount, who grew up on a dairy farm in eastern Ontario, emphasized that the guaranteed income is meant to strengthen – not replace – current supports.

"This is not about cutting other programs," Mount said to the media. "It's about giving farmers a stable base so they can plan, invest and innovate rather than constantly firefight."

See **INCOME**, Page 20.



Just the facts

In 100 years

In 1925, 37 per cent of Canada's workforce was employed in the agricultural sector. Now, in 2025, only 1.1 per cent of country's workforce works in the sector. That small cohort of individuals feeds the country and sends food exports around the world.

Source: The Globe and Mail

\$4.3 billion

The profits recorded by major grocery retailers Loblaw, Sobeys and Metro in 2025. These companies have seen their profits more than double, jumping from 1.5 to 3.5 per cent, since the pandemic.

Source: Québec Solidaire

93%

The percentage of Quebecers who support the purchase of locally produced food, according to a survey conducted by the Union des producteurs agricoles.

Source: UPA

\$17,571.79

That is the amount the average family of four is expected to spend on food in 2026, which represents an increase of \$994.634, or a 4-to-6-per-cent increase, from this year.

Source: Canada's Food Price Report 2026 by Dalhousie University issued Dec. 4, 2025

TAKE ME HOME



MADELEINE LANGLOIS, THE ADVOCATE

Ah, a country road in winter. As the sun sets on this scene in western Quebec, near the Ontario boarder, the tallest of the snow-covered branches almost look like they are on fire. And that is the contradictory beauty of this time of year, when the illusion of fire mixes with the reality of the cold. It's a good time to be home.



Mission

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

Vision

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

Shared Values

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

Board Members

Morgan Arthur, Hinchinbrooke / **Andrew Boersen**, Melbourne / **Matthew Burns**, Cookshire / **Roy Copeland**, Lachute / **John Côte**, Eastern Townships / **Gib Drury**, Vice-president and Treasurer, Alcove / **David Gillespie**, Allumette Island / **Andrew Hickey**, Ouyon / **Chris Judd**, Past president, Shawville / **Patricia Keenan**, Brompton / **Phil Lavoie**, Vaudreuil-Dorion / **John McCart**, President, Grenville-sur-la-Rouge / **Ben Nichols**, Compton / **Amin Ruf**, Stanstead / **Andrew Simms**, Shawville

Quebec Farmers' Association Membership Application

Last Name.....

First Name

Address.....

Phone

Cellphone.....

E-mail

Price

Agricultural or forestry producer, rural resident or retired farmer:

☐ 1 year \$68.99 (\$60 + \$3 GST (5%) + \$5.99 TVQ (9.975%))

☐ 2 years \$137.97 (\$120 + \$6 GST (5%) + \$11.97 TVQ (9.975%))

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

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

Signature

Membership includes

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

Quebec Farmers' Association
 555 boul. Roland Therrien, office 255
 Longueuil, Quebec J4H 4E7

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

600 attend UPA 101st Congrès Général

More than 600 members of the Union des producteurs agricoles attended the organization's 101st annual Congrès Général in early December.

The event attracted both provincial and federal politicians, including the newly appointed Quebec Agriculture Minister Donald Martel, who addressed the delegates along with his cabinet colleague, Environment Minister Bernard Drainville.

Opposition parties were represented as well, with Liberal leader Pablo Rodriguez, Parti Québécois leader

Paul St-Pierre Plamondon and Québec Solidaire spokesperson Ruba Ghazal outlining their priorities for the agriculture sector.

Heath MacDonald, Canada's new Agriculture and Agri-Food minister, along with his parliamentary secretary, Pontiac-area MP Sophie Chatel, also outlined the federal government's vision for the farming sector, while providing glimpses into the ongoing trade talks with the U.S. and a progress report on trade initiatives with other countries that impact the sector.



PHOTOS BY THE QUEBEC FARMERS ADVOCATE

1. Federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Heath MacDonald speaks with reporters. 2. Liberal leader Pablo Rodriguez called for more support for Quebec farmers. 3. Quebec Agriculture Minister Donald Martel (CENTRE) and Environment Minister Bernard Drainville (RIGHT) take questions from delegates along with UPA president Martin Caron.

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO

The Quebec Farmers' Association Annual Information Day

Thursday, January 29, 2026, 9:30 a.m.

At the Faculty Lounge, Macdonald Campus of McGill University, Ste. Anne de Bellevue

Warren Grapes Educational Fund Scholarships will be awarded
Deadline for submissions: Friday, January 9, 2026

Send submissions to qfa@upa.qc.ca
For more information, email your questions to: qfa@upa.qc.ca

News

Maple producers accuse government of breaking deal

Use of public lands cut in half in Bas-Saint-Laurent region

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

Quebec maple syrup producers say they feel duped by the provincial government's sudden decision to back out of an agreement to preserve about 1,000 hectares of maple groves in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region – land that was supposed to be dedicated to the development of maple syrup products.

"To put it bluntly, we feel betrayed," said Luc Goulet, president of the Producteurs et productrices acéricoles du Québec (PPAQ), which represents 13,500 maple syrup producers and more than 8,400 maple syrup companies in Quebec.

In a prepared statement last month, Goulet said the government's decision goes against an agreement reached last May between the maple syrup producers' group and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests.

"Despite the agreement in principle reached between our organization and the (ministry) last spring, which provided for the medium-term production

of maple syrup on 2,000 hectares of maple groves in public forests in the Bas-Saint-Laurent region, we are now being told that maple syrup producers will have to settle for half of what was agreed upon," said Goulet.

"The ministry's reinterpretation of the agreement in principle is at odds with the principles on which our negotiations were based and with the announcement made by the former minister of Natural Resources and Forestry, Blanchette Vézina."

After several months of negotiations, the Producteurs et productrices acéricoles and the ministry reached an agreement in principle in May in which the government confirmed the granting of 50,000 hectares to the PPAQ for the next 20 years. For the Bas-Saint-Laurent region, 2,000 new hectares had been reserved for medium-term maple syrup production projects.

Instead, only 1,000 hectares will be granted to the region, representing a loss of approximately 215,000 taps. The ministry says it is imposing this change because unused maple syrup

production permits should be included in the hectares identified for the Bas-Saint-Laurent region. However, according to Goulet, these areas were already included in the development of maple syrup production and were not part of the agreement with the ministry, which provided for the development of new acres of maple groves.

Justin Plourde, president of the Bas-Saint-Laurent-Gaspésie Maple Syrup Producers Association, echoed Goulet's frustration, adding that the Legault government is turning its back on maple syrup producers.

"We have been trying for three months now to convince the ministry to keep its word," Plourde said. "Its refusal to honour its commitment to maple syrup development threatens investments of \$21.5 million and projects involving dozens of businesses. We are angry. We negotiated in good faith, made concessions, and now they are trying to go back on what was agreed upon. This is unworthy of a government that says it wants to stimulate the economy and regional development."

The Bas-Saint-Laurent region, which includes 114 municipalities along the south shore of the St. Lawrence River east of Quebec City, is a major maple syrup producing region. Within its eight regional county municipalities, 695 maple syrup companies with more than 10 million taps, produces 47.4 million pounds of maple syrup annually, representing a total value of \$157 million. Mostly located in public forests, these businesses are essential to the vitality of many villages in the region and contribute to the economic fabric of local businesses, Plourde said.

Goulet and Plourde are now calling on Natural Resources and Forests Minister Jean-François Simard to reconsider the ministry's position and grant 2,000 hectares of maple groves in public forests for medium-term maple syrup production projects, as initially agreed. They are also calling on the minister responsible for the Bas-Saint-Laurent region and Member of Parliament for Rivière-du-Loup-Témiscouata, Amélie Dionne, to defend the interests of maple syrup producers in her region.

Greenhouse growers want Quebec to roll back carbon pricing

Costs are making it tough to compete with growers in other provinces

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

Quebec greenhouse growers are seeing red in their efforts to get the Quebec government to back off on its "aggravating" carbon pricing policies, saying they undermine the competitiveness of a sector that is central to food self-sufficiency.

Emerging from their annual general meeting in St. Hyacinthe in November, the Producteurs en serre du Québec (PSQ) issued a statement, describing interprovincial and international market pressure as "unbearable." Together with the Union des producteurs agricoles, the provincial greenhouse growers association said Quebec's carbon pricing "is an aggravating factor and the Quebec government must quickly correct the situation."

PSQ president André Mousseau called on François Legault's CAQ government to harmonize the conditions for applying carbon pricing with those in the rest

of Canada by implementing measures that guarantee a direct financial return to businesses "so as not to harm the development and competitiveness of Quebec greenhouse businesses to the benefit of their competitors."

"Greenhouse businesses in Quebec are facing an increasingly complex and unpredictable business environment," Mousseau said in a statement. "Carbon pricing is an aggravating factor, and the Quebec government must quickly correct the situation."

UPA vice-president Paul Doyon said the province's current carbon pricing represents "exorbitant amounts for the greenhouse sector, a strategic sector for our food autonomy, and also harms the entire Quebec agricultural sector. This considerable blow to the competitiveness of our businesses, a situation unique in Canada, must stop immediately."

For the greenhouse sector, carbon pricing represents very significant amounts,

in the order of several hundred thousand dollars. For many greenhouse businesses, this represents an additional energy cost of 20- to 25-per-cent higher than the competition in neighbouring provinces.

"Carbon pricing can easily represent up to 5 per cent of direct production costs, which is equivalent to a company's entire profit margin," said Jacques Demers, president and CEO of Productions Horticoles Demers, which operates a large greenhouse operation in St. Nicolas in the Chaudières-Appalaches region, producing tomatoes, peppers, strawberries and raspberries.

Quebec producers say they do not question the importance of fighting climate change. However, according to the PSQ, they consider the current situation to be unfair compared with their counterparts in other provinces.

"A rebalancing is needed," said Mousseau.

"Carbon pricing was already unfair

at a time when producers in other provinces, unlike those in Quebec, were reimbursed in whole or in part for their contribution," added Hervé Barjol, owner of Serres Ste-Anne, a flower-grower in St. Alexandre in the Haut-Richelieu region. "It has become even more so since the federal program was abandoned last April."

"The Quebec government must make major changes to its carbon pricing and implement measures that guarantee a direct financial return to businesses so as not to hinder their development and competitiveness," Mousseau said.

According to Mousseau, some producers are seeing their energy costs hit levels 20- to 25-per-cent higher than their counterparts in Ontario or the Maritimes. He said this reality was confirmed by several greenhouse growers present at the PSQ meeting, who estimate that carbon pricing now accounts for up to 5 per cent of direct production costs.

Quebec couple honoured as Outstanding Young Farmers

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

Quebec took centre stage at this year's Outstanding Young Farmers event, as a young Quebec farming couple were selected as national winners from among six Canadian farms, while a 2003 OYF winner was honoured with the prestigious W.R. Motherwell Award, presented annually to an individual who demonstrates excellence in leadership and dedication to Canadian agriculture.

Pierre-Luc Barré and Virginie Bourque of La Ferme Yves Barré Inc. in St. Damase, in Montérégie, just east of Beloeil, took home a 2025 OYF award, while Carl Marquis, a 2003 OYF alumnus, was presented with the W. R. Motherwell Award. The awards were presented at the OYF national event held in Toronto on Nov. 28.

"Canada's 2025 Outstanding Young Farmers event was a resounding success, once again celebrating inspiring candidates from across the country who represent agriculture with passion and excellence," said OYF president Amy Cronin.

"Pierre-Luc Barré and Virginie Bourque exemplify the program's values: excellence, continuous learning, progress, innovation and sustainability," Cronin said. "They generously dedicate their time and energy to contributing to the prosperity of their communities and are outstanding advocates for agriculture."

Growing potatoes

After being given the task of inspecting onions and hot peppers, Barré said he became interested in the third-generation farm where he grew up in St. Damase. In 2010, after studying horticulture at the Institut de technologie agroalimentaire du Québec, he joined La Ferme Yves Barré. When the hot pepper market declined, a \$100,000 investment was made in potato equipment to plant 30 acres. Barré and Bourque now plant 300 acres of potatoes on their 1,140 cultivated acres, producing 18 million pounds of potatoes.

Today, La Ferme Yves Barré is looking at diversifying its production. Pierre-Luc's grandfather started with tomatoes, sugar beets and sweet corn. His father introduced grain corn, peppers and onions, and they now produce corn, beans, soybeans, and potatoes. The future goal is to plant 500 acres, but

the obstacle is the difficulty of accessing good land. Bourque joined the farm full time in 2017 and handles accounting, marketing, and communications.

Started from scratch

While six national winners were announced, the OYF event also took note of the exemplary work of Quebec farmer Carl Marquis, who, along with his wife, Lorraine Lemay, continue to operate their Lorka Farm in St. Croix, near Laurier Station, southwest of Quebec City.

To begin his work as a first-generation farmer, Marquis purchased a run-down farm from an unrelated seller in 1983, at the age of 19. Today, he and Lemay, their two daughters, Catherine and Justine, and their son-in-law Alexandre manage an impressive family business that includes a dairy farm (250 cows), grain (850 acres), and maple syrup production (5,000 taps).

"Passion is what defines Carl. Thanks to his example and vision, the next generation is ready to take its rightful place at Lorka Farm," said OHL vice-president Ryan Mercer.

"One cannot speak of Carl Marquis without mentioning his wife, Lorraine, who is also his partner, business associate, right-hand woman, and the mother of his children, and who undoubtedly plays a vital role in Carl's life and well-being."

Celebrating its 45th anniversary, the OYF program is an annual competition that recognizes farmers who exemplify excellence in their profession and promotes the immense contribution of agriculture. Open to participants under the age of 40 whose majority of their income comes from farming, participants are selected from seven regions across Canada, and two national winners are chosen each year.

The other regional 2025 OYF recipients were:

- Thomas and Catherine Cuthbert of Southcoast Agro Farms in Nanaimo, British Columbia
- Sarah Weigum of Alect Seeds in Three Hills, Alberta
- Brady and Lindsay Funk of Braylin Farms in Wymark, Saskatchewan
- Ryan and Romy Schill of Circle R Livestock and Revolution Wool Company in Wallenstein, Ontario
- Katie Campbell and William Spurr of Spurr Brothers Farms in Melvern Square, Nova Scotia.

Berry and produce growers win l'Ordre national du mérite Agricole

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Quebec honoured outstanding agricultural entrepreneurs from the Capitale-Nationale and Chaudière-Appalaches regions at the 133rd l'Ordre national du mérite agricole (National Order of Agricultural Merit or ONMA) awards ceremony in November.

Provincial Minister of Agriculture Donald Martel presented awards recognizing excellence in production management, environmental commitment, strategic development and community impact.

"Behind the businesses that feed Quebec, there are passionate, dynamic and innovative people who find the time to be involved in their communities," Martel said. "This is impressive, and it deserves to be highlighted."

Brothers Daniel and Guy Pouliot of Ferme Onésime Pouliot Inc. in St-Jean-de-l'Île-d'Orléans received the competition's highest honour, earning first place in the gold medal category.

Their seventh-generation family farm has distinguished itself through innovation and tradition in berry production. Ferme Onésime Pouliot cultivates strawberries and raspberries both in traditional fields and using modern soilless growing systems under shelters. The operation employs more than 200 workers and has expanded beyond farming to include a research and development department and Onésime Pouliot Solutions, an agency facilitating the hiring of temporary foreign workers for Quebec growers.

The farm supplies 80 per cent of its production to Quebec supermarkets, with the remainder going to markets in the northeastern United States.

"We're very happy, but especially happy for our team here," said Guy Pouliot. "We have a great young team that's eager to work, and fully committed. The judges certainly felt that."

Polyculture Plante Inc., operated by Simon Plante in Sainte-Pétronille, also located on L'Île-d'Orléans, earned second place regionally and nationally in the gold category. The diverse operation grows a dizzying variety of produce, including strawberries, raspberries, corn, apples and pumpkins, along with vegetables and maple products. More, the farm has become a popular agritourism destination where visitors can enjoy pick-your-own



Brothers Daniel and Guy Pouliot of Ferme Onésime Pouliot of St-Jean-de-l'Île-d'Orléans won top honours in this year's edition of the Ordre national du mérite agricole.

experiences and sample fresh apple juice and cider from Cidrerie du Bout de l'Île.

Simon Plante, who joined the family operation in 2009, now serves as sole shareholder while working alongside his partner Alison Blouin and family members to continue the farm's legacy of quality local food production.

Ferme Lorge Inc. from Saint-Narcisse-de-Beaurivage claimed first place both regionally and nationally in the silver category. The pork operation, established in 1985, is managed by the team of Jessy Blaney, Georges Boivin, Pascal Boivin, Jimmy Boivin, Lorraine Duclos and Chantale Paradis. The farm represents sustained growth across generations in the Chaudière-Appalaches region.

Created in 1889, the l'Ordre national du mérite agricole is an institution in Quebec's agricultural community. The competition recognizes the development of a dynamic, innovative and profitable agri-food industry, recognizing Quebec producers for their love of the profession, determination and entrepreneurial spirit. One region "hosts" the awards each year, focusing on producers and agri-businesses from that region. This year's ONMA was devoted to the Capitale-Nationale and Chaudière-Appalaches regions. The 2026 competition will be hosted by the Outaouais, Laurentides and Lanaudière regions.



JACOB BOOMSMA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Farmers and farm management professionals from across Canada attended the 2025 edition of AgEx in Winnipeg.



John McCart
QFA President

My take-aways from visiting Manitoba farm country

It's a business

The following morning started with an interesting presentation by Jason Fiske, a product manager with Farm Credit Canada, who described what he called a "CEO Checklist" for successful farm managers. The list included items like working with a team of advisers, having a risk management plan, a marketing plan, a farm transition plan, a current will and a HR plan.

The afternoon featured a fireside chat called Navigating Farm Transition Resistance. With an estimated \$200 billion worth of farm assets set to be transferred in the coming years, a lot of planning must be done.

One example of a farm transfer that went well focused on a young gentlemen who was involved with everything about the farm from a young age. The transfer of his parents' farm to him and his sister was well anticipated.

The other example was of a farm where the owner divided his farm into three enterprises, putting each of his three sons in command of one, but ownership of the farm remained with the father, who had stated on many occasions that all would be taken care of eventually.

After many years, the father remarried. His new wife had a daughter. Then, the farmer began showing signs of dementia. It ended up with the wife and her daughter wanting their share of the enterprise and demanding many millions of dollars based on the value of the enterprise, not their labour, which was none. The lawyers are handling it now. A huge payout is expected to someone because there was no formal plan ever written down.

Farmers carry heavy burden

There was also a presentation on mental health. Farming remains one of the industries with the highest rates of mental-health problems. Burnout, financials, weather all play into compromising a farmer's well being.

The events of the first day ended with a panel discussion called Elevating Farm Business Management in Canada. Moderated by Heather Watson of Farm Management Canada, the panelists included Ove Karlson, a farm business adviser from Sweden; Jill Vermey, president of the Keystone Agricultural Producers; and Terry Betker from Backswath Management. A discussion on the similarities between Northern Europe and Canada was quite entertaining as was the common belief

that all decisions on the farm should involve the next generation.

The following morning was a session on digitization and farm data literacy. The discussion between all in the room was very productive as farming and farmers enter the world of Artificial Intelligence. Key elements included: Should this be a national strategic priority? What can we expect? And, who controls the data?

Toured the countryside

I also had the opportunity to visit the rural areas around Winnipeg. The flatness of the land and the rich black soil that they have to work with is striking. And despite it being the middle of November, corn, soybeans and edible beans were still in the fields as the harvest in that area had been delayed due to excessive rains this fall.

Compared with the regions here in the east, it really must be seen in person to comprehend the size of the southern Manitoba prairie. In order to match the size of the fields, the tractor dealerships have followed suit with the largest tractors, combines and drills to match. The investment is enormous, which underlined the need for strong farm management skills.

I had the opportunity to attend the AgEx conference in Winnipeg last month. And I thought I would share with you a few of my observations during my first visit to Manitoba.

AgEx is an annual event, presented by Farm Management Canada, which attracts both producers and farm management professionals from across Canada.

Set over three days, it offered a wide range of discussions on farm-related topics.

The focus of the first day was on young farmers, and included a leaders' roundtable discussion.

The second day featured farm tours, which included a stop at the Glenlea Research Station, associated with the University of Manitoba, where we saw work being done with egg production using different housing techniques, pork production and a robot dairy.

In the afternoon, the bus stopped at a research station on a farm on Grosse Isle, which uses a wide range of emerging technology, including sensors, field mapping, weather stations and soil water monitoring.



24NOVEMBERS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Agricultural finance institutions in many countries say extreme weather and variability in temperature and rainfall are part of the material risk in growing food.

Climate impacts now part of financial risk equation

Christopher Bonasia
The Advocate

A recent report shows that climate change's impacts across the agri-food system are increasingly pushing agricultural finance institutions to offer products and services that incorporate sustainability.

"Farmers are exposed to climate risk, which means banks are, too," says the Environmental Defense Fund in its recent report, *Climate & Sustainability in Ag Lending: A Survey of Global Agricultural Finance Institutions*.

The report surveyed executives from agricultural finance institutions (AFIs) across 17 countries in Africa, Australia, Europe, India, Canada and Mexico, South America and the United States. Nearly all respondents stated that the extreme weather and variability

in temperature and rainfall linked to climate change is a material risk, with more than half saying that long-term physical risks raise the greatest concern.

Risk is part of the picture

Of the 156 AFIs that responded to the survey, 94 per cent said climate change was a material risk, up from 87 per cent in 2022.

In fact, the respondents were unanimous in this statement across all countries except for in the United States (which hosts 45 of respondent institutions – though even some of them thought so, too).

AFIs' exposure to climate risk will, in turn, have its own effects on farmers and ranchers. Eighty-eight per cent of AFIs said they expect their customers – more than half of whom are primary

producers – to experience negative impacts as a result, such as decreased assets or revenue, less access to finance or higher production costs. The most significant expected impact will be higher insurance premiums, according to 50 per cent of respondents.

Interestingly, just over half of responding AFIs also said they expect customers to see at least one benefit from climate change, like increased revenue or reduced production costs.

Sustainability is now core

With the U.S. respondents remaining an exception, all AFI respondents also said there is a "clear rationale" for investing in sustainability, and they are starting to factor climate risk into their decision-making. Not only that, but an increasing number are even considering climate change as a 'core factor,' and

the share of those who rarely or never consider it is falling.

Many institutions are also developing "toolkits" to address climate risk, and some are offering sustainability products and services like longer term loans, crop and weather insurance, and funding for sustainable farming practices. But some also identified some challenges stopping them back from taking more action, with 44 per cent of respondents ranking "unclear return on investment or lack of business case" among their top three barriers preventing them from further action.

The Environmental Defence Fund adds that unlocking greater sustainability financing will require setting clear business cases, supportive government policies and funding, and collaboration.

Thank you to our donors

The Quebec Farmers' Association would like to thank the following individuals and associations for the generous donations to the Warren Grapes Educational Fund.

2025

Gazonnière Alexander, Terrebonne
Caroline Begg, Ste. Anne de Bellevue
Richard Goodfellow, St. Félix de Kingsey
Doreen Tryon Fraser, Magog
Bulwer branch of the Quebec Farmers' Association, Sawyerville

*There is
still time
to donate*

2024

Erin Hogg, Westmount
 Caroline Begg, Ste. Anne de Bellevue
 Thelma Lang, Howick
 Brookbury Grace United Cemetery
 Association, Dudswell
 Doreen Tryon Fraser, Magog

Richard Goodfellow, St. Félix
 de Kingsey
 Canadian National Christian
 Foundation, Ottawa
 Peter Jewett, Mansonville
 Charitable Impact Foundation
 Bulwer branch of the Quebec Farmers'
 Association, Sawyerville

In 2023

David Nichols and Glenda McGerrigle, Compton
 Erin Hogg, Westmount
 Caroline Begg, Ste. Anne de Bellevue
 Mahlon Grapes, Compton
 Gazonnière Alexander, Terrebonne
 Brookbury Grace United Cemetery Association,
 Dudswell
 Richard Goodfellow, St. Félix de Kingsey
 Canadian National Christian Foundation, Ottawa
 Alanna Smith, Ottawa
 Quebec Farmers' Association Bulwer Branch,
 Sawyerville

2022

James Johnston, Melbourne, Que
 Erin Hogg, Westmount
 Nicholas David
 Benjamin Nichols, Compton, Que.
 Allan Sutor, Waterville, Que.
 Caroline Begg, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Que.
 Richard Goodfellow, St. Félix de Kingsey, Que.
 Doreen Tryon Fraser, Magog, Que.
 Aileen Doucette Hodgson, Ste. Marthe
 Glenda McGerrigle and David Nichols, Compton
 Wendall Conner, Canton de Hatley
 Brookbury Grace United Cemetery Association,
 Bury, Que.
 Thelma Lang, Howick, Que.
 Mahlon and Carolyn Grapes, Compton, Que.

2021

Brookbury Grace United Cemetery Assoc., Bury, Que.
 Erin Hogg, Westmount, Que.
 Doreen Tryon Fraser, Magog, Que.
 Bernard Hodge, Cookshire, Que.
 Mahlon Grapes, Compton, Que.
 Allan Sutor, Waterville, Que.
 Douglas Brown, St. Isidore de Clifton, Que.
 Richard Goodfellow, St. Félix de Kingsey, Que.
 Christian Molgat, L'Orignal, Ont.
 The Canadian National Christian Foundation
 The Benevity Community Impact Fund
 Mildred Miller, Sherbrooke, Que.
 Gazonnière Alexander, Terrebonne, Que.
 Caroline Begg, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Que.
 Gregory Elliot, Howick, Que.
 Ross Bishop, Canton de Hatley, Que.
 Benjamin Nichols, Compton, Que.

2020

Marlon Grapes, Compton, Que.
 Allan Sutor, Waterville, Que.
 Caroline Begg, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Que.
 Douglas Brown, St. Isidore de Clifton, Que.
 Richard Goodfellow, St. Félix de Kingsey, Que.
 Bury Women's Institute, Bury, Que.
 Erin Hogg, Westmount, Que.
 James Laidlaw, Breckenridge, Que.
 Wendall Conner, Hatley, Que.
 Gazonnière Alexander, Terrebonne, Que.
 Thelma Lang, Howick, Que.
 Brookbury Grace United Cemetery Association, Bury, Que.
 Doreen Tryon Fraser, Magog, Que.
 Gregory Elliot, Howick, Que.
 Aileen Doucette Hodgson, Ste. Marthe, Que.
 Ross Bishop, Canton de Hatley, Que.

2019

James Johnston, Melbourne, Que
 Christian Molgat, L'Orignal, Ont.
 Erin Hogg, Westmount, Que.
 Wendall Conner, Hatley, Que.
 Caroline Begg, Ste. Anne de Bellevue, Que.
 Douglas Brown, St. Isidore de Clifton, Que.
 Brookbury Grace United Cemetery
 Association, Bury, Que.
 Bernard Hodge, Cookshire, Que.
 James Laidlaw, Breckenridge, Que.
 Clyne Macdonald, Ste Marguerite, Que.
 Gazonnière Alexander, Terrebonne, Que.
 Thelma Lang, Howick, Que.
 Doreen Tryon, Magog, Que.
 Bury Women's Institute, Bury, Que.
 Aileen Doucette Hodgson, Ste. Marthe,
 Que.

In 1998, the Quebec Farmers' Association created the Warren Grapes Education Fund to promote agriculture education within the province's English-speaking farming community by offering annual scholarships. The fund is named after Warren Grapes, a farmer from the Eastern Townships who served as QFA president for many years before his death in 1994 following a battle with cancer. Grapes went to high school in Sawyerville, Que., and attended Macdonald College in Ste. Anne de Bellevue. He also taught an agricultural course at Champlain Regional College in Lennoxville.

Each year since then, the QFA has awarded thousands of dollars in scholarships to students pursuing post-secondary studies in the field of agriculture. The latest one were handed out to three students in the Farm Management Technology program at Macdonald College during the association's Annual General Meeting Information Day on Nov. 15.

To date, more than 130 scholarships have been awarded.

Thank you for your generosity.

Anyone can make a contribution to the Warren Grapes Education Fund by mailing their donation to: The Quebec Farmers' Association, 555 Roland Therrien Blvd. Office 255; Longueuil, Que., J4H 4E7. All contributions are tax deductible, and an official receipt will be issued.

Investing in the future





Keeping it in the family:

Next generation maintains 160-year dairy tradition going strong

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

When you grow up on a dairy farm that milks a herd of 320 Holsteins three times a day, it's understood that everyone will be helping out with the chores.

In fact, Laura Coddington remembers trying to help out on the farm, located in the town of Melbourne in the Eastern Townships, from a very young age.

"I couldn't have been 5 years old yet," Coddington said. "My twin sister, Jennifer, and I heard that new calves were born and asked, 'Can those be our cows?!' We named them princess names – Cinderella and Snow White. I can remember trying to bottle-feed my calf and not being tall enough to hold the bottle. So I put the three-litre bottle on the top of my head and asked my mom, 'Are we doing good?'"

Now 20 years old, Laura has the same enthusiasm for dairy farming, but has significantly improved her technique. And a big part of that is being part of a veritable agricultural dynasty, where she and her eight siblings are the fifth generation of Coddingtons to farm the same land in this little town just north-west of Sherbrooke.

"Between my oldest sibling and I there's a 10-year age gap," Coddington explained.

Started young

"She was working on the farm when I was just being a silly goon," she said of her eldest sister. "But once I got to high school and was able to do more, I'd milk more often and was doing more tractor work. By Grade 10 and 11, I was involving myself more on the farm."

The Coddington farm has been a fixture of the Melbourne countryside since the 1860s. For Laura, being a part of that legacy is just a part of day-to-day life – and something to preserve.

"I think of it as something honourable," Coddington said. "I'm proud to be on the farm that my ancestors started. We see the old photos and how the farm has lasted hard times, the tough economics – and it's stayed there through it all."

Rite of Mac passage

Another part of the family tradition is learning about agricultural innovation at Macdonald Campus. Four of Laura's older siblings – Meagan, Jeremy, Kaitlyn and Julie – went to Mac.



COURTESY LAURA CODDINGTON

The Coddingtons of Melbourne in the Eastern Townships: from left to right (TOP ROW) Jennifer, Julie, Laura, father Thomas; (MIDDLE ROW) Serena, Jessie, Meagan, mother Kathleen; (FRONT ROW) Kaitie, grandmother Marion, Vicky and Jeremy.

When it was time to make a decision about post-high school education, Laura knew what she wanted.

"At first, I was really focused on staying within the ag industry, but in a full-time job; like being a feed nutritionist or a veterinarian," she explained. "But I discovered that I really prefer the hands-on parts of farming. That, and seeing how many extra years of school my sister, Jessie, is doing to become a vet convinced me to return to farming!"

Last May, while enrolled in Mac's Farm Management and Technology program, Coddington excelled, winning the sizeable SORIF "*Elles font plus que la job*" scholarship for female students preparing to work in traditionally male-dominated industries. She also gained enormous work experience during her summer internships for the FMT program.

More than one way

"I worked at Sutherland Dairy in

Alexandria, Ontario, for a summer," Coddington said. "That taught me so much about how many ways there are to manage a dairy farm. Sutherland's herd is about as big as my family's, so it was fascinating to see how they did things differently from my parents."

"My family rarely has custom work done; they had lots done. They did bed-packs; my family has always done sand bedding. The farm was the same size, but so many aspects were different."

Coddington's time at Mac has also taught her how difficult the dream of farming can be for aspiring producers who don't have a family farm to go back to. Many of her classmates are from non-farming backgrounds, and start-up costs pose a huge challenge.

"I feel bad for people who want to start in dairy these days," Coddington said. "It's almost impossible – unless you want to take the huge risk of buying a whole dairy farm with quota."

"For beef or fruit and vegetable

production, it's possible, but you really have to get out there and make those community connections that will help you."

Room for everyone

That's why, for Coddington and her siblings, the family farm is a refuge and a gift. It's always there to return to, for work or rest.

"Anyone is welcome in coming back to the farm," she said. "We're now a big enough corporation to support a lot of us working on the farm. The more the merrier!"

And Laura is one of the many Coddington siblings who have caught the farming bug – and want to make it their livelihood.

"Speaking for myself and a lot of the friends I've known, once you work in ag and you find it interesting, it's really hard to go away from it. You want to be part of that community."



THE ADVOCATE

About 600 members of the UPA attended the organization's 101st Annual General Meeting in Quebec City earlier this month.



Martin Caron
UPA President

The UPA's 101st Annual General Meeting, held under the theme United For Our Future, brought together more than 600 producers and decision-makers from the agricultural and forestry sectors to discuss the current landscape and the outlook for the sector.

In my remarks, I emphasized that our producers remain confident about the future, despite numerous challenges. I also stressed the need for alignment and recognition, which are essential for our producers' role in the economic, regional and agricultural development of Quebec. Next year will be critical in this regard, especially due to the provincial election and ongoing trade negotiations with the United States.

United to feed Quebec, united for our future

Ministers addressed members

I would like to thank all the speakers, including Quebec's Agriculture Minister Donald Martel and Environment Minister Bernard Drainville. The tabling of draft regulations, which includes a partial lifting of the two-decade moratorium on cultivated land, is very welcome news.

Thanks also to federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Heath MacDonald and Sophie Chatel, MacDonald's parliamentary secretary, and MP for Pontiac-Kitigan-Zibi; along with the other provincial party leaders – Pablo Rodriguez, leader of the Quebec Liberal Party; Ruba Ghazal, co-spokesperson of Québec solidaire; and Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, leader of the Parti Québécois, who all spoke to the UPA delegates.

Also among the UPA guests were Jill Verwey, the first vice-president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture; and screenwriter and

author Kim Lévesque-Lizotte.

Many deserve thanks

Thanks also to those who spoke during the UPA Développement international (UPA DI) lunchtime presentation marking the 80th anniversary of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, including director of FAO's Liaison Office for North America; Marie-Josée Audet, assistant deputy minister for Africa and Middle East Relations, Francophonie and Multilateral Affairs at the Ministère des Relations internationales et de la Francophonie; and Gerardo Almaguer, president and CEO of Développement international Desjardins.

The UPA Gala, hosted by Gino Chouinard, celebrated the Jacobs-Ghielen family from the Capitale-Nationale-Côte-Nord region, who were named the Fondation de la famille agricole's Farm Family of the Year. The event also presented four awards of excellence

(UPA Capitale-Nationale-Côte-Nord Federation; UPA Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean Federation; Association des producteurs maraîchers du Québec; Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec), as well as the UPA's Coup de cœur award, given to Marie-Claude Bibeau.

Congratulations also go out to the 21 UPA employees we honoured for 25 years of service, and to the entire team for making the 101st edition of the gala a resounding success.

In closing, I would like to thank you for re-electing me as president of the UPA. Rest assured that Stéphanie Levasseur, who this year assumes the role of first vice-president; Julien Pagé, elected second vice-president, and I are very proud to represent you.

A heartfelt thank you to Paul Doyon for his outstanding service to the UPA over all these years.

I wish you a wonderful holiday season!

Quebec names consortium to operate agro-park

Farm in urban setting to promote innovative agricultural practices, models

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

The Quebec government has finalized the selection of a consortium to manage its ambitious 250-acre agro-park in Quebec City.

Describing the selection as “an important milestone in the evolution” of the agro-park project, the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture (MAPAQ) announced in November that Agrinova and a consortium of organizations would manage the park, paving the way for MAPAQ to “promote agricultural innovation, applied research and collaboration among stakeholders in the agri-food sector,” it said in a statement.

The consortium represented by Agrinova is composed of four other organizations: the Fédération de l'UPA de la Capitale-Nationale-Côte-Nord, the Faculty of Agricultural and Food Sciences at Université Laval, the Institut de recherche et de développement en agroenvironnement and Moisson Québec.

“This consortium will be responsible for managing the agro-park and carrying out its mission, which is to protect and enhance the agricultural land that comprises it, while promoting the implementation of innovative

agricultural practices and models,” the MAPAQ statement said.

With this announcement, MAPAQ says it reaffirms its commitment to the modernization and sustainability of the agricultural sector, in addition to showcasing a “site of exceptional quality in the heart of Quebec City. This project will contribute to the growth of resilient urban agriculture and support Quebec’s food self-sufficiency.”

In September 2022, the Quebec government acquired land in the Quebec City suburb of Beauport from the Sisters of Charity of Quebec with the intention of turning it into an agricultural innovation park. Of the approximately 203 hectares acquired by the government, about 75 per cent was designated as class 2 and 3 soils, which are of excellent agronomic quality.

The amount of the bid was not made public, but reports pegged the offer at about \$30 million, approximately the municipal valuation of the land. Included on the land was a large seven-storey convent built in 1952.

According to MAPAQ, starting in 2026, the consortium will work to implement new projects on the site in order to realize the agro-park’s ambition of becoming a benchmark showcase for agriculture.



GIGGEL

The provincial government acquired the 250-acre farm in the Quebec City suburb of Beauport in 2022 from the Sisters of Charity of Quebec.

“By promoting the potential of the territory and the agri-food ecosystem, the agro-park is concretely responding to several objectives of the 2025-2035 Bio-food Policy – Feeding our ambitions.”

Ban on transport of wild animals extended due to new cases of rabies

Frederic Serre
The Advocate

With new cases of rabies being reported, the Quebec government is extending its ban on the transportation of certain live wild animals – including raccoons, foxes and coyotes – until Feb. 4, while adding 13 municipalities in the Eastern Townships and the Montérégie to its list of regions at risk and subject to the movement ban.

In a statement issued Dec. 3, the *Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs* said anyone who contravenes the ban is liable to penalties, including fines. The ministry said that, as of Dec. 6, the following Eastern Townships and

Montérégie municipalities will be considered “at risk” and will be included in the ban: Ascot Corner, Cookshire-Eaton, St. Isidore de Clifton, St. Malo and St. Venant de Paquette, as well as Franklin, Howick, Léry, St. Barnabé Sud, St. Simon, Ste. Hélène de Bagot, Ste. Martine and Très St. Sacrement.

According to the ministry, this addition is required due to new rabies cases detected in the province in recent months. Some of these cases are in an area affected by a second raccoon rabies outbreak, namely the municipalities of Stanstead, Stanstead Est and Ogden. The ban, issued by ministerial order, applies to the following species: raccoons, striped skunks, grey foxes, red foxes, as well as coyotes and their hybrids.

Relocating a nuisance animal, an injured animal or one that appears to be orphaned can contribute to spreading rabies to areas that are currently free of the disease. An animal that appears healthy can carry the virus and develop signs of the disease several weeks, or even several months, after becoming infected. In the event of nuisance situations involving these species, residents must use preventive and deterrent measures. As a last resort, if these measures remain unsuccessful, the animal may be killed in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. No permit is required in this context, and this may be done outside hunting and trapping seasons.

Between December 2024 and last month, 88 cases of raccoon rabies have

been detected in Quebec. In 2025, significant raccoon rabies control efforts were carried out by the ministry. Three vaccination operations were conducted: the first in April, followed by a second in August and September, and a third in October. Rabies is a contagious and fatal disease that can infect all mammals, meaning it can be transmitted from an infected animal to a human.

The government is asking residents of the Eastern Townships and the Montérégie to take an active part in enhanced surveillance. Citizens – especially those living in affected areas – are asked to report any dead raccoons, skunks or foxes, or any that appear disoriented, injured, unusually aggressive or paralyzed, by calling 1-877-346-6763.



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

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

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

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

Membership Application

Last name.....

First name.....

Address

Phone.....

Fax

E-mail.....

PRICE

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

MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES

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

Signature.....

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

Date.....

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

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

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

Frank Fields, Low

Helen and Walter Last, Val des Monts

Bill Anderson, Howick

John Côté, St. Catherine de Hatley

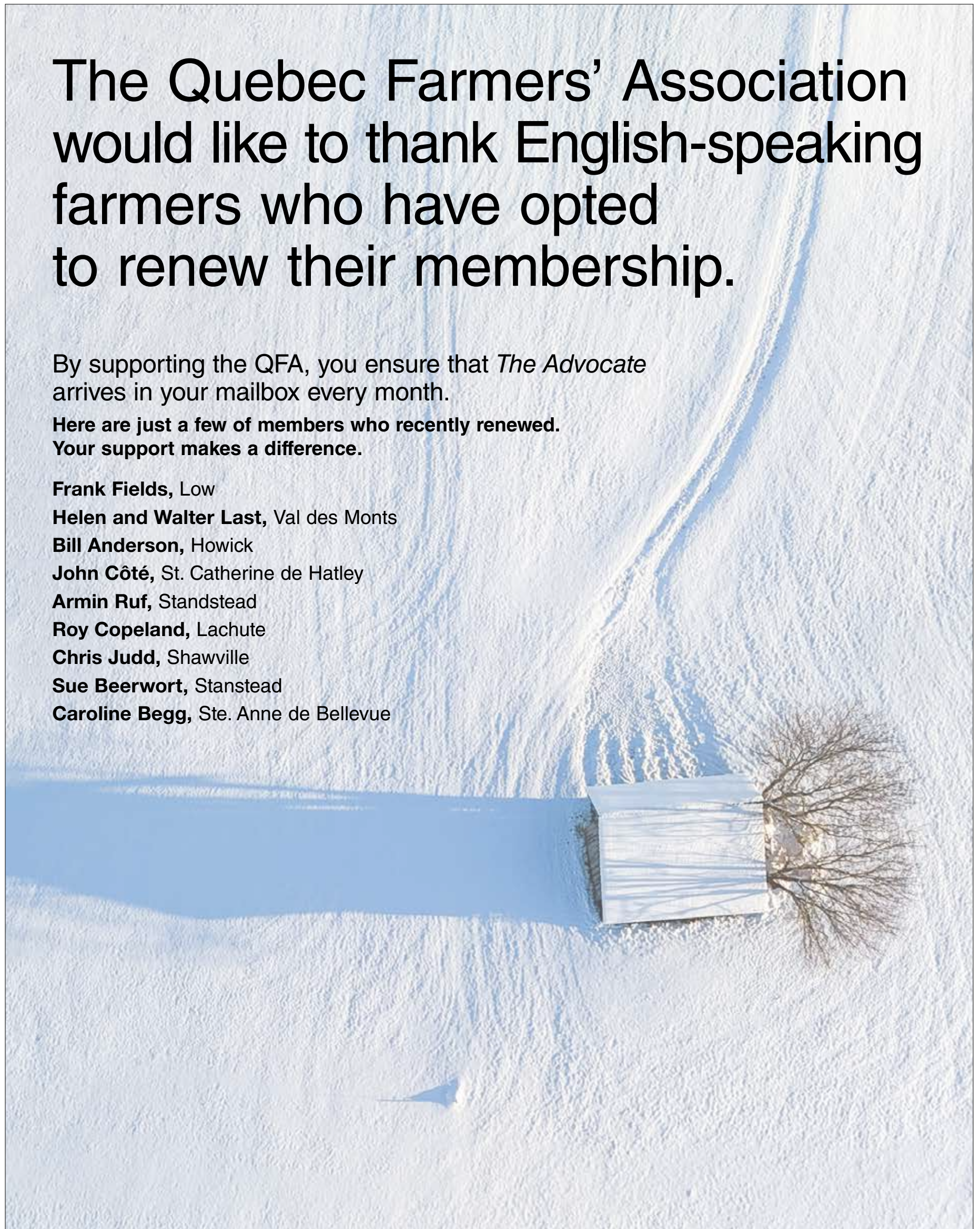
Armin Ruf, Standstead

Roy Copeland, Lachute

Chris Judd, Shawville

Sue Beerwort, Stanstead

Caroline Begg, Ste. Anne de Bellevue





The Forum Report

QFA videoconference warns of hidden pitfalls in farm transfers

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate

Transferring a family farm is one of the biggest – and scariest – decisions an agricultural producer will make. It's a process loaded with financial implications, decades of history and difficult family conversations.

Agricultural tax specialist Joffrey Moy, who deals with farm transfers every day at SCF Conseils in Sherbrooke, laid out the complexities of succession planning in a videoconference hosted by the QFA earlier this month, warning participants that "a farm transfer is one of the biggest financial events in a farmer's life."

Start with business type

"Your legal structure determines almost everything about how your transfer can work," said Moy, who grew up on a dairy farm in France before moving to Quebec at the age of 7.

In a transfer process, farmers must first determine whether they operate as a sole proprietorship, a partnership or a corporation. Each comes with its own rules governing the capital-gains deduction, the ratio of farm to non-farm assets and the eligibility criteria farmers will need to show.

As Moy mentions, people are often surprised by how far back the proof must go.

"Sometimes we need to go back 30 years to prove that you were really farming, and if you can't prove it, the government won't give you the deduction."

What's more complicated is that the rules themselves have changed over time, which adds confusion.

"If you bought your farm before 1987, your conditions are one thing. If you bought after 1987, they're something else completely. People often assume the rules are the same for everybody, but they're not."

One of the most unexpected traps involves the family home, particularly in the context of partnerships and corporations. As Moy noted, rising real estate values can suddenly skew asset ratios.

"The house is not considered a farm asset, and in some cases the house becomes too valuable. I've seen farms lose their capital-gains deduction because the house was worth too much."

Different rules for farms

Luckily, said Moy, farmers enjoy certain tax privileges that other business owners do not.

For instance, a family farm can be donated to a child, or sold at a reduced price, without triggering tax on its full market value. The transaction can legally occur at the chosen transfer price rather than what the farm is actually worth.

"If you own a grocery store or a hardware store, you don't have that option," Moy told the videoconference's attendees. "But with a farm, you can donate it to your child, and the tax authorities will accept the transaction at the price you choose."

In recent years, new intergenerational transfer rules have been introduced to support more flexible transfers between extended family members. According to Moy, these changes are significant.

"These rules allow, for example, an uncle to sell to a niece without being punished by dividend taxation. It's a major improvement."

The challenge now, Moy says, is adapting to how the rules will be interpreted in practice as accountants and authorities work through real files.

And watch out: tax rules applied to farm businesses and land at death can also confuse families.

"If the farm goes to the spouse, you can choose the value of the transfer. If it goes to the children, it must be at fair market value."

The human side

Timing is everything in a farm transfer. Moy urged participants to begin planning early and to resist the instinct to settle everything quickly.

"People go too fast. If you rush a transfer, you can trigger taxes that the parent will never recover."

He said families often panic when a parent's health declines or when there is tension between farming and non-farming children. But rushing, he warned, can have severe consequences.

Another hidden issue is the federal Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT), which can apply even when a farmer uses a capital-gains deduction in his or her tax declaration.

"The Alternative Minimum Tax is the silent surprise."

Moy emphasized that AMT can sometimes be recovered over seven years – but only if the retiring farmer



LEX BROERE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Transferring a family farm from one generation to the next is one of the biggest – and scariest – decisions an agricultural producer will make.

has enough income during that period.

"And if you're retiring, that's a problem," he explained.

Family dynamics can be equally challenging. Moy noted that transfers involving multiple children, or disagreements about future roles, can drag on for years.

"One farmer once told me his transfer took more than 10 years. And honestly, that's not unusual."

In Quebec, farmers must also navigate layers of administrative authorities, from the Commission de Protection du Territoire Agricole (CPTAQ) to provincial federations, which can complicate or delay restructuring, particularly in a supply-managed sector.

Of course, this process costs money. And Moy warned against hiring accountants who don't regularly work with agricultural businesses on a regular basis.

"A mistake costs a lot more when you hire an accountant who isn't aware of how complex farm tax law



Sherbrooke-based agricultural accountant Joffrey Moy advises farmers not to rush farm transfers.

can be," he noted.

For Moy, the single most important advice for any farming family thinking about the future is "start early."

"Don't wait for an emergency. A good transfer happens over time. And above all – don't rush it."



Sun sets on long history of practical advice and weather predictions

Terry O'Shaughnessy
The Advocate

Gardeners and farmers alike were a bit shocked recently when they heard the news that the *Farmers' Almanac* had decided to shut its doors. After more than two centuries, the much loved publication announced it would end a 208-year run with a final 2026 edition (which is out now). But just as quickly, the shock turned to confusion. Because as it turns out, there are in fact two almanacs: the *Farmers' Almanac*, which has stopped its presses, and *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, which is, yes, even older, at 234 years in print – and counting. Understandably, its editors are at some pains to note that *The Old Farmer's Almanac* is still going strong.

At first I was startled to learn there was more than one such publication – because how could two separate farmer's almanacs have flourished and maintained their own readerships for so long? But it seems I shouldn't have been surprised.

There were once hundreds of these kinds of almanacs serving farmers and gardeners across North America, spotlighting all the natural peculiarities of regions, terrains and weathers. Even Benjamin Franklin published his own *Poor Richard's Almanack* back in the day. It offered observations about the land and astronomy, not to mention advice on crop-planting times, fishing calendars and home remedies for the 13 colonies of New England who were busy rebelling against the most powerful king in the world, but not too busy to get their corn in on time.

Almost all of these almanacs are gone now except these two venerable publications which have survived the passing of the years. Until this month, that is.

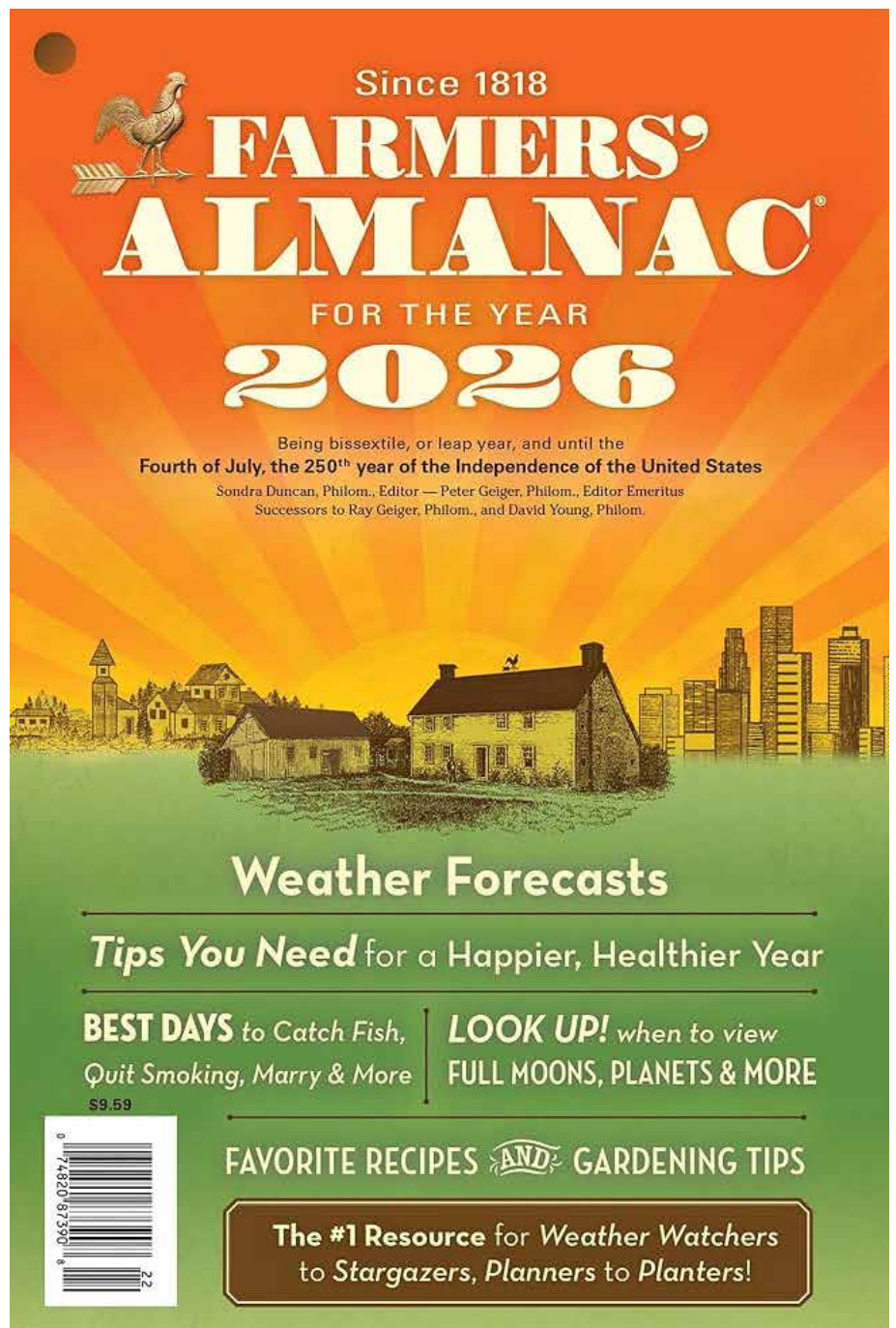
With its editors citing financial challenges created by a changing media landscape as the cause, the last edition of the *Farmers' Almanac* was published in Maine, its modern home, though it was first printed in New Jersey in 1818.

For two centuries it had advised farmers on long-range weather forecasts and other practical information. Gardeners were also avid readers of the almanac, both for predictions about the weather (that endlessly fascinating topic for anyone), and for tips on growing food and flowers. Home cures were also popular, as were recipes and star-gazing information, especially the dates of full moons and, in certain regions, the tides.

The final *Farmers' Almanac* 2026 issue is on the shelves now. Access to its website was discontinued on Dec. 1.

In a final statement to its readers, the editors closed with this: "So go ahead – plant your peas when the daffodils bloom. Watch for a red sky at night. Tell the kids how Grandpa always swore by the Almanac. That's how our story stays alive."

After 208 years, that's an impressive story.



COURTESY FARMERS' ALMANAC

This is the final edition of the *Farmers' Almanac*, a publication that has offered what it calls "handpicked wisdom" for 200 years.

Trends in agriculture



Chris Judd
The Advocate

At a recent Quebec Farmers' Association annual general meeting the subject of artificial intelligence came up. As I looked around the room, the majority in attendance had that "deer in the headlight" look on their face.

After a brief discussion, I realized that most farmers already use AI. They use cell phones that can tell time, track our lives on a calendar, wake us up in the morning, remind us of future events just in time, remind us of our wife's birthday, contain a compass, have a built-in GPS that is updated about road conditions and the best way to get wherever we ask, give us the markets in real time and answer most questions that we ask.

Our smart phones can translate almost any language in real time. As we talk into it in one language, it can relay the message in whatever other language we chose to someone at the other end of the line. And we take it all totally for granted.

Cars and trucks have GPS as standard equipment now. You can now track the location of cell phones, transport trucks and employees who work at different locations. When travelling, you can get the price of fuel anywhere in North America before you leave. And then get it updated anywhere along the way that has cell service.

Milking machines

Robotic milkers for dairy operations have been used for more than 25 years, and have improved every year. Cows can be identified by electronic ear tags, neck transponders, leg transponders and, maybe soon, with small chips under the skin that will allow cows to be identified by the milking system, by walking by an identifying panel, or a hand-held "wand" or by Wi-Fi anywhere in the barn.

All information gathered can be recorded in the barn computer or on your cell phone. Every time an animal is sick, distressed, has an upset tummy, has been treated, gets her feet trimmed, every heat, or breeding, calving, and a total genealogical history – it can all be stored.

Information about how every milk cow is "graded," recording what traits are excellent or less, as well as the

Artificial intelligence is everywhere on the farm



KITREEL/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

From cell phones to GPS-driven machines to selecting the sex of a calf, technology has certainly changed on the farm.

amount of milk produced, fat content of that milk, protein content and other milk solids like lactose – can all be stored on computer. Each of those same traits can be improved or made worse by different sires available from all over the world.

Genetic selection

AI can now match a cow with the best choice in a bull to improve the calves she produces. Farmers can also select "sexed" semen that will only produce heifer calves.

Lighting can be turned on or off by the use of timers or sunshine to provide animals with just the right length of daylight (16 hours for laying hens and milk cows).

By using an app on your phone, you can take a picture of a weed, and the phone will tell you the name of that weed.

You likely have noticed fields of corn or other crops that are planted in very straight rows. Those fields were probably planted with a planter mounted on a GPS-equipped tractor. Many new tractors, sprayers, combines, forage harvesters and now one-row autonomous corn planters are equipped with GPS so they can work

at night as well as in the day.

Soil sampling maps

Fields can be sampled with the use of GPS so a sample can be taken on each one-hectare plot. Then, a map can be prepared using AI that will show the farmer which part of the field needs more or less of any given nutrient or organic matter.

Many new fertilizer spreaders and corn planters now have "variable rate" application technology, which uses a soil map prepared using field data, yield data and the best economic rate. All this data is put together using a "layered" mapping technique.

Some newer combines and forage harvesters have "on-board" electronic labs to measure yield, moisture, protein, starch, sugars, as well as both acid and neutral detergent fiber.

Who owns the info?

All of this has led to a very big question being asked: Who has access to all this information that this new technology generates?

Is it the people who invented the measurement tools? Is it the company that sold the machine? Is it the person paid to harvest the crop? Is it the farmer?

Or, is it everyone?

Can the company that sold the machine use the information to inform its decisions to buy the best land in the country as an investment?

Much of the information gathered by all this new technology is not owned by the farmers who buy the use of it. When it breaks down, even if the farmer has the computer skills to repair it, it has to be repaired by the company that sold the "package."

Times have certainly changed

I can still remember when the "yearly bill" for that old telephone with the separate speaker you held in your hand and a mouthpiece attached solidly to the wall was only \$9. That was when grandpa sold a quart of milk for five cents!

Prices have gone up!

Today, you could be on vacation in Italy and use your cell phone to check the temperature of your house in Quebec, or check to see if your student is at college or down at the bar three blocks away.

At that Quebec Farmers' meeting last month, we decided that most of us needed a short course: "AI 101."

The Resourceful Naturalist



Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

Forget CSI. Next big crime series could be PSI: Plant-Scene Investigation

In medicine, the term “vegetative state” is no longer used to describe patients in an unresponsive condition, as it implies they are less than human. But in the courtroom, a witness is sometimes brought in to give key evidence while it’s in a vegetative state. Because it’s vegetation. For decades, plants have played a niche role in crime-solving, and some experts think their use as forensic tools should be greatly expanded.

Forensic botany, a branch of crime-scene investigation, first came to prominence during the 1935 trial of the man accused of kidnapping and murdering the baby of storied American pilot Charles Lindbergh. A wood scientist proved through growth-ring analysis that wood found at the suspect’s home was used to make a hand-made ladder left at the crime scene, helping to ensure a conviction.

Moss is the focus of a study published in November. The authors call moss a “silent witness,” as it thrives in nearly all environments, tolerating floods, droughts and extreme pH conditions from highly alkaline to strongly acidic. It will grow on any substrate, including stones, wood, city sidewalks, buildings, human skeletons, you name it. Other research from late 2025 suggests that moss is so tough that it could survive for decades in outer space. In other words, moss is always watching us.

Moss tracks

One of the neat things about moss from a crime-solving perspective is that it readily breaks into small pieces that cling well to fabrics. The take-home there is that when a crime is committed outdoors, there’s a very good chance the guilty party will take home a bit of moss. And with around 12,000 species worldwide, moss can tie a crime to very specific areas.

But the study’s authors were dismayed to find that, after searching through 150 years of records, moss was used to solve murders just 11 times. Cases ranged from 1929, when the thickness of moss on human bones let Australian police determine how long the body had been there, to 2015, when moss helped fill in details about the scene of a suicide.

Location, location, location

In a 2011 case in the U.S., a man confessed to killing his daughter, saying her body was somewhere in northern Michigan. Fortunately, bits of moss on the man’s shoes were a species that only grew in certain micro-habitats. It narrowed the location of the girl’s body down to a small area more easily searched.

The authors said plants, especially mosses, are potent yet underutilized forensic tools. They named one barrier to the wider use of forensic botany as a lack of training in law enforcement. Another hurdle is that identifying moss can be time-consuming.

In a 2025 case where moss helped solve the crime of desecration of bodies at a cemetery, lab technicians made a breakthrough only after weeks of studying moss samples under microscopes.

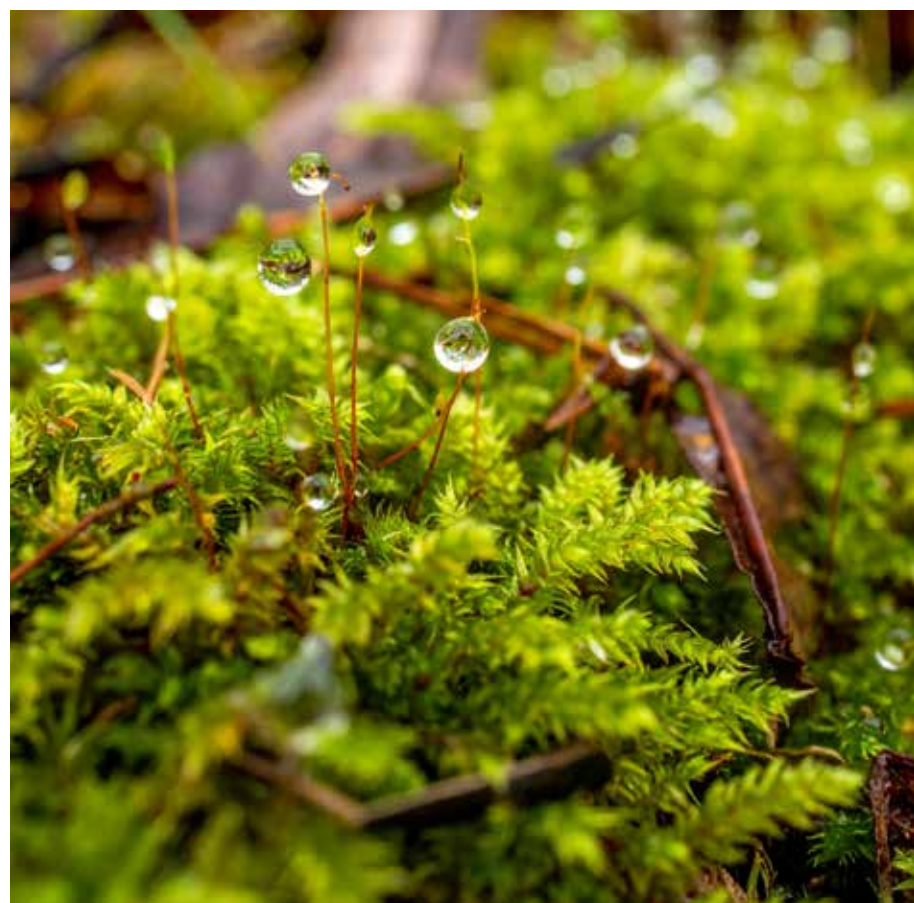
In a strange twist, one type of moss has preserved the bodies of murder victims dating back to the Bronze Age. Dubbed bog bodies, they bear signs of stabbing, strangulation, and other violent ends. We have such details thanks to a clan of 300-ish moss species in the genus *Sphagnum*, variously called peat, sphagnum, or bog moss. Shaggy-looking and bright green, moisture-loving sphagnum moss is found mainly in the northern hemisphere on the tundra, in coniferous forests, and especially on peat bogs.

Sphagnum thrives on bog edges, where it slowly extends in a floating mat onto open water. Over time, moss can cover over a bog, forming a “water-bed” of moss that bounces when you walk on it. As the moss adds new growth each year, older parts at the bottom slough off into the water, where they release an acidic molecule called sphagnan that stops microbes from breaking down flesh.

Dead moss fragments also strip the water of oxygen, which further limits decay. And finally, the humic acid in peat moss forces water from soft tissue, basically turning skin to tanned leather. Most bog bodies come to light when compressed peat, used as fuel, is dug from thick peat beds where sphagnum has filled in former bogs over millennia.

Pollen can help police

Another plant-based forensic tool that is nothing to sneeze at is pollen, the



HEROIC STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Moss and pollen have played a niche role in crime-solving, with some experts claiming their use as forensic tools should be expanded.

male half of the equation in a flowering plant’s reproduction process. The microscopic size and typically barbed or spiked surface of pollen grains mean they go everywhere and stick to everything. Good luck washing pollen from natural-fibre fabrics like wool and cotton, because it may take a while.

Pollen’s other claim to fame is its extreme durability, thanks to an outer coat made of a uniquely tough polymer that can last for millions of years. Intact pollen grains are routinely found in fossil beds. These attributes spawned a field of science known as forensic palynology. (Scrabble players take note.)

When the decomposing body of a young girl surfaced in Boston Harbour in 2015, she remained “Baby Doe” until analysis of pollen from her clothing pinpointed the neighbourhood she had lived in, and police were able to identify her and arrest two suspects.

Lasting impressions

In a 1993 case in Bridgend, England, walnut pollen on a murder suspect’s

shoes tied him to the place where he disposed of his victim. Even though there hadn’t been walnut trees in that area for 30 years, the pollen was still in the soil.

But that’s nothing compared with what happened in Austria in 1959. Police in that case had a suspect with motive and opportunity, yet no body. But in the mud found on the suspect’s boots were grains of fossilized hickory-tree pollen that dated back 20 million years, apparently having washed out of a rock formation. There was only one place near Vienna where a weathered outcrop of that age existed, and that’s where they found the body.

Maybe one of the popular streaming platforms should try a new series called Plant Scene Investigation. It would be great if author Michael Pollan could write the script, with Kate Moss cast in the lead role.

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



Selacta: A new tool to streamline cow selection and improve herd profitability

Rodrigo Molano

Dairy production expert and

Daniel Warner

Data scientist, Lactanet

Selecting cows for production and reproduction is inherently complex, as multiple factors can influence herd performance, profitability and sustainability. Lactanet has developed Selacta, a tool to simplify and optimize this decision-making process by leveraging data integration and artificial intelligence capabilities.

Currently, several conformation, performance or genetic criteria allow the ranking and selecting of cows. In this process, decision-makers assume that criteria based on past performance, genetic values or short-term projections, like 305-day milk yields, are closely linked to long-term performance and profitability. Moreover, while cows can be ranked by genetics and performance, crucial decisions are often made without considering their likelihood of remaining in the herd. This omission can jeopardize genetic progress, longevity and overall herd profitability.

With this in mind, Lactanet aimed to determine how closely existing selection criteria relate to future performance and explore whether AI could help better predict cows' future revenues, profitability and probability of survival.

Can existing selection criteria predict future lifetime revenues?

Following the same approach as Lactanet's Pro\$ genetic index and Cow Ranking by Income, the baseline for this analysis was cumulative yields at six years of age. The six-year threshold represents a mature age and can be considered a realistic lifespan for a dairy cow. Comparing cow performance at a standardized age rather than at the end of a lactation, age at calving or parity provides a more impartial and consistent reference.

Using a production dataset covering approximately 12.5 million individual milk tests from 2,587 Quebec farms between 2017 and 2025, cumulative milk, fat and protein yields at six years of age were calculated retrospectively for 12,927 cows of all breeds. Cumulative revenues and margins were estimated using economic models reflecting current milk prices and

operating costs.

Cumulative performance at six years was compared with existing selection indicators to determine how effectively future performance could be predicted. Projections at 305 days showed the closest association, but their predictive power remained relatively weak.

For example, cumulative fat yield over 305 days explained only 44 to 57 per cent of the observed variation in future cumulative fat yield, depending on parity.

Although cumulative fat at six years increases as 305-day fat yield during the first lactation rises, the variation around this relationship undermines prediction reliability.

For example, cows producing 400 kilograms of fat in 305 days during their first lactation could end up producing anywhere between 1,500 and 2,500 kg of fat by age six. Other indicators, such as Pro\$, showed an even weaker relationship, explaining only 17 per cent of the variation in cumulative revenue at six years. Consequently, while existing selection criteria help identify superior cows in terms of production and genetics, there is room for improvement when predicting future performance and profitability.

We conclude that improving the ability to predict cows' future performance could help identify which cows to retain in the herd based on their expected contribution to profitability, particularly for cows in the intermediate range of performance or genetic value.

Applying AI to predict future yields, revenues

Using the same dataset described earlier, a multilayer perceptron model (a type of deep-learning artificial neural network) was applied to predict future yields and revenues at six years (for cows ages 5.8 years or younger) or at their next birthday (for cows older than 5.8 years).

The resulting models demonstrated strong predictive performance, explaining up to 97 per cent of the variation in future yields with average mean absolute errors of 5.68, 5.92 and 5.51 per cent for milk, fat and protein, respectively.

The prediction error increases with longer prediction intervals, up to 10 per cent for the most distant predictions made for a first-lactation cow. Predictive models for future revenue and margin showed similar performance.



For example, the relationship between observed revenues and those predicted by the model. Model performance was independent of breed or cow age, reinforcing its robustness.

The ability to predict cows' survival probability emerged as a critical need to support strategic and sustainable decision-making. To address this, data from 214,700 involuntary culling cases were analyzed, and explanatory variables were selected to build an XGBoost decision-tree model, another promising AI technique, to predict survival probability at regular intervals over the next two years.

For example, survival curves predicted by this model for two cows (A and B). Cow A had a higher survival probability over the next year but a similar probability over the next two years compared with cow B.

In reality, cow B was culled four months after prediction, while cow A was culled 20 months later, aligning well with the model's forecast. The predictive performance achieved was relatively good at 0.71 (on a scale of 0 to 1), indicating that the model could identify most positive cases (culling) and avoid excessive false positives. It is not perfect. Nonetheless, survival indices generated by this model can still be used as a decision-support tool (e.g., for initial screening, prioritizing cases) and should always be combined with other selection criteria and sound judgment

for critical decisions. Future improvements to this model are possible as additional data, like reproduction and health events, become available.

These new AI-driven selection criteria, focused on future performance and survival probability, will be integrated into Selacta, a new interactive dashboard available in 2026. Users will also have access to more than 20 existing selection criteria related to genetics, transition period, health, reproductive status and performance to rank cows according to their needs. Among other features, Selacta will offer:

- The option to customize operating costs for herd-specific margin calculations,
- Provincial benchmarks and herd performance indicators,
- A composite index calculated from user-defined indicators.

Selacta aims to help producers and advisers rank and select cows based on their criteria of choice, support short- and medium-term management decisions through new indicators based on predicted yields and survival probability, and ultimately improve herd longevity and profitability.

This project received financial support under the Territorial and Sectoral Development Program of the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation, along with contributions from the Producteurs de lait du Québec.

Grains



Soybean, corn yields down in Quebec this year

Ramzy Yelda

Senior market Analyst

Producteurs de grains du Québec

Statistics Canada published its final estimates of Quebec's grain crops, showing soybeans and corn yields down compared with September estimates.

Soybean yields hit 2.7 tonnes per hectare, while corn yields hit 8.9 tonnes per hectare. The yields are much lower than the five-year averages of 3.1 t/ha and 9.6 t/ha, respectively. These yields are the lowest since 2014.

Corn production is down by 18.3 per cent, hitting 2.95 million tonnes (MT), while the soybean output is down by 15.6 per cent, for a total of 1.17 MT.

As corn is mainly used locally, Quebec will have a deficit in 2025-'26 since total demand for feed, ethanol and alcohol production is about 3 MT. That explains the significant increase in the local basis

over the past few weeks.

Yields are also lower for oats (2.4 t/ha) and barley (3.1 t/ha). Production is down by 14.3 per cent for oats, slipping to 124,000 tonnes, while barley is down 8.1 per cent, hitting 99,000 tonnes.

The canola yield is slightly lower at 2.2 t/ha, which represents a 46.5-per cent production drop, dipping to 19,000 tonnes. This is due to a very large decrease in acreage.

Wheat is the only crop with a higher yield this year. It hit 3.6 t/ha mainly due to winter wheat. Production is down by 0.8 per cent, slipping to 302,000 tonnes overall due to lower acreage sowed.

Total production for the six main grains drops by 16.5 per cent, or 923,000 tonnes, to finish at 4.66 MT, a result of a poor season that started with very late seedings, which was followed by severe dryness from mid-July until the end of August.

Grain producers call for urgent review of carbon pricing

The release of the results of the 45th Quebec-California carbon markets auction revealed that the price of emission units has remained virtually the same as in the August 2025 auction. For Quebec grain producers, this means that, once again this year, they will have to pay significant costs to purchase emission allowances related to the use of energy inputs – mainly a direct result of the unavoidable use of farm diesel.

In recent years, grain producers have contributed approximately \$150 million to the Electrification and Climate Change Fund (ECCF) through carbon pricing, which represents nearly 30 per cent of the sector's contributions. Regardless of this fact, less than 2 per cent of the ECCF funding for climate initiatives has been allocated to the grain sector.

"Our businesses are among the most affected by unpredictable weather, but they are also the ones that receive the least support to deal with it. We contribute significantly to the funding of the ECCF, but we don't have access to the funds we need to adapt or reduce our emissions. This imbalance must be corrected," said Sylvain Pion, president of the Producteurs de grains du Québec (PGQ).

Our organization is also concerned about Bill 7, an act to reduce bureaucracy, increase state efficiency and reinforce the accountability of senior public servants. One measure in this bill would allow the government to transfer the accumulated surplus of \$1.7 billion from the Electrification and Climate Change Fund (ECCF) to the Generations Fund and the Land Transportation Network Fund. We supported the principle of better managing the surplus, but we very much hope that Quebec grain producers will first receive their fair share, proportional to their contributions, before any of the surplus is redirected.

Carbon pricing, in its current form, has counterproductive effects in today's agricultural sector. Energy inputs – including diesel, propane and natural gas – are essential for farming operations, and producers have no viable technological alternatives in the short term.

"We want to be part of the solution, but it should be recognized that we don't yet have access to electric tractors, grain dryers powered by non-fossil fuels or machinery that can replace our current machines. Expenses are imposed on us and we are not given the necessary tools," Pion said.

The measures announced in the government's recent economic update are a step in the right direction and show the government understands there must be changes. That said, the PGQ hopes that the next provincial budget will finally provide a sustainable and equitable solution to the problem of carbon pricing applied to the agricultural sector. We must not lose sight of the fact that we are talking about agriculture and, by extension, food, a sector that is at the heart of Quebec's ability to feed its population.

Markets webinar

The PGQ's Market Information Service will offer a free webinar Jan. 29, 2026, starting at 7:30 p.m. The latest Statistics Canada estimates for the 2025 harvest will be discussed. The speakers will be Ramzy Yelda, senior market analyst with the Producteurs de grains, and Étienne Lafrance, the group's market information officer. For all the details, see pgq.ca/calendrier-des-evenements/webinaire-des-marches.

Minimum seed grain prices for 2025

The PGQ met with its accredited associations in November to agree on minimum seed grain prices for the 2025 production year. You can find the list of gross minimum prices on our website: pgq.ca/mise-en-marche-des-semences



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.



News

FOOD PRICES: Cost of chicken expected to jump

From Page 1

"Canada has strengthened beef import partnerships with Mexico and Australia," the report states. "This should help stabilize prices, but the squeeze is expected to continue until at least 2027."

As a result, the price of chicken is also expected to jump in 2026, as more people turn to poultry as an alternative to beef.

Rising prices at the grocery store has now pushed a quarter of the country into what the authors describe as food insecurity households.

"Despite steadier inflation, Canadian families are still feeling the squeeze at the grocery store," said Dr. Sylvain Charlebois of Dalhousie University. "Our forecast for 2026 makes one thing clear: food affordability will remain a major pressure point in the year ahead."

Underlying that trend, according to the authors is that despite a show of national buy-Canadian patriotism that began in 2025 as the U.S. imposed trade tariffs on Canada, research has shown that "price is still the main driver of Canadian food purchases."

In 2025, the report predicted overall food price increases of 3 to 5 per cent, which researchers say data in the first 11 months of the year support, with hikes falling in that range, at 4 per cent. However, looking at individual food categories, meat prices in 2025 rose more than predicted, while prices for bakery goods, fruits and vegetables were slightly lower.

The annual publication is compiled by researchers at Dalhousie University, Saint Mary's University, University of Prince Edward Island, Cape Breton University, the University of Guelph, Université Laval, the University of British Columbia and the University of Saskatchewan.

Opposition party calls on CAQ to cap grocery store profits

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate

In an effort to help consumers deal with inflationary prices, Québec Solidaire earlier this month called on the provincial government to cap the profits earned by the giant grocery retailers in the province to 2 per cent.

"I meet people who work full time and are barely making ends meet," said Québec Solidaire spokesperson Ruba Ghazal in a statement Dec. 2. "After housing, groceries are the biggest problem. It's simple, food prices have increased twice as fast as inflation."

"Olive oil is now \$16, butter \$8, and for some fruits and vegetables like onions and broccoli, the price has literally doubled since the pandemic," Ghazal continued.

She called for an urgent parliamentary committee meeting, sending a letter to the chair of the Committee on the Economy and Labour, requesting a working session focused on grocery prices.

Since the COVID-19 lockdowns, grocery chains in Quebec – like Loblaw, which operates the Provigo and Maxi group of food retailers; Sobeys, which runs the IGA outlets; and Metro – have seen their profit margins more than double, jumping from 1.5 to 3.5 per cent, the opposition party said. Collectively, that represents profits of \$4.3 billion in 2025.

"Inflation is a convenient scapegoat for large grocery chains, which have taken advantage of the post-pandemic period to double their profits," Ghazal said.

"This can't go on. It's our responsibility as



ADVOCATE FILE PHOTO

The cost of groceries in Quebec has increased twice as fast as inflation, according to opposition party Québec Solidaire.

elected officials to ensure that the major grocery chains play by the rules and to find solutions to protect families' wallets," she said.

Capping grocery-store operators to a 2-per-cent profit margin would save Quebec families about \$225 a year, or roughly one week's worth of groceries for an average family.

"With the holidays approaching, \$225 in savings can make all the difference for Christmas dinner," Ghazal said.

In 2025, Metro posted \$1 billion in profits, or 4.6 per cent; while Loblaw posted \$2.6 billion in profits in the first three quarters of the year, representing a 4.2-per-cent margin. Empire Company, the owner of Sobeys, reported \$700 million, or 2.2 per cent, in profits this year.

INCOME: Move aimed at helping to stabilize sector

From Page 1

The NFU's policy document points to the shrinking number of Canadian farms, rising average age of operators and pervasive financial stress. Chronic instability, it notes, has become a defining feature of the profession.

"Economic uncertainty is a leading cause of poor mental health among farmers and farm workers," the report states, arguing that a basic income could help producers focus on long-term decisions instead of short-term survival.

After the announcement, stories from producers across the country quickly illustrated the stakes. One of them is Alexis Légère, a young vegetable producer from Saint-André, New Brunswick, who took over a small farm in recent years. Légère told Radio-Canada that the economics of beginning a farm are "borderline impossible"

for many of his peers.

"You start running the numbers some months and you wonder if you're working at a loss," he said. Rising inputs, weather uncertainties and delayed revenue cycles make the early years particularly difficult.

Légère said many young people he knows would love to farm, but hesitate because the financial risk feels overwhelming.

Mount agrees their hesitation is justified.

"We hear these stories everywhere," he said. "Talented young farmers doing everything right, but facing structural barriers they can't overcome alone. A guaranteed income won't solve every issue, but it gives them the stability they need to stay in the sector."

Supporters argue that a guaranteed income could help established farmers

remain on the land while lowering the barrier of entry for younger generations. It could also boost rural economies, since stable incomes are more likely to circulate locally, supporting equipment dealers, co-ops, processors and community businesses.

Légère's experience illustrates the NFU's argument. Early in a farm's life cycle, he said, every unexpected repair or input purchase can trigger new debt.

"When you're starting out, you don't have reserves. Something breaks and suddenly you're in the hole for months."

Other young producers at the NFU convention echoed his concerns, saying they rely on off-farm jobs to keep their operations afloat. That extra income is essential, they said, but it reduces the time they can devote to building resilient, diversified farming businesses.

As policy-makers assess the proposal, its supporters say the key will be designing a program that is accessible, non-conditional and complementary to existing supports.

"This isn't about replacing everything else," Mount noted. "It's about recognizing that farming is a public good and that farmers deserve a foundation under their feet."

For Légère, the idea of a guaranteed income is not abstract – it is directly tied to whether people like him can build a future in agriculture.

"There are people who have a family, who have children and who would like to get into it. But, for fear of not generating enough income to support their families, they do not embark. That \$50,000 could really help."

Silo gases: Silent but deadly

Ricky Scuderi

*William H. Miner Agricultural
Research Institute*

Silo gases should not be taken lightly. Even brief exposure to silo gases can be fatal, making them one of the greatest health risks on a farm. There are two main silo gases to be aware of: carbon dioxide (CO₂) and nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).

The considerable drought conditions across the northeastern U.S. and Canada have increased the risk for nitrogen dioxide production from ensiling.

What is nitrogen dioxide?

Nitrogen dioxide is a yellowish-brown gas that smells like bleach. It is heavier than air and tends to hang close to silos. It is deadly, even brief exposure can cause death or permanent lung damage. It is produced from nitrate during ensiling by bacteria belonging to Enterobacteria and Clostridia, which are undesirable for optimal silage fermentation. Nitrate can be converted to Nitric Oxide (NO), which is then converted to NO₂ when exposed to oxygen. One of the main causes of NO₂ production during ensiling is from excess nitrates in forages.

Where do the excess nitrates come from?

During normal plant growth, nitrates are used for protein synthesis. However, there are several stressors that will alter plant growth, including drought conditions, excessive fertilization and damage caused by hail or frost.

Although nitrate uptake will continue at a slower rate, protein synthesis is often stopped during these instances that leads to an accumulation of nitrates. Additionally, plants will rapidly up-take nutrients when prolonged drought conditions are followed by notable rain events.

Can production of NO₂ be stopped after harvesting?

Generally speaking, this is not possible. Trying to prevent NO₂ production post-harvest is like trying to alter kernel processing scores after harvesting. It is not doable.

However, good management practices at the time of harvest can help minimize this activity. This includes good packing density, and timely and proper bunker covering.



E KRAMER/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Drought conditions can contribute to the increased risk for nitrogen dioxide production from ensiling.

How do we mitigate the risks?

If there is suspicion for increased risk of NO₂ production in forages by way of drought conditions, it is strongly recommended to take some precautionary steps. During harvest and packing, ensuring proper management practices can potentially mitigate the risk by minimizing the growth of undesirable bacteria that convert nitrates to nitrite (precursor to NO₂ before oxygen exposure).

For instance, enterobacteria are generally outcompeted by lactic acid bacteria under optimal conditions. Although this will not halt NO₂ production entirely, ensuring good ensiling management practices could potentially help. This includes achieving optimal packing density, proper bunker covering, and inoculant usage.

If forages have already been harvested and ensiled, the next steps involve avoiding the silos to allow for gases to dissipate naturally. The risk for NO₂ production is highest during the early phases of ensiling. Some sources cite 12-60 hours, while others caution 10 days post-harvest. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to avoid bunkers for the first 10 days post-harvest. If working with tower silos that are attached to feed rooms, keep these doors shut and ventilate the rooms for at least two weeks. Do not enter silo rooms during this period.

What are the warning signs for NO₂ exposure?

Remember NO₂ is visible. Do not approach any bunkers or feed rooms that have a low-hanging yellowish-brown gas. However, sometimes the gas can be present with minimal visible signs. Step away and seek fresh air immediately if you smell bleach or start to experience even the slightest throat irritation.

Since the gas rapidly converts to a caustic form upon contact with lung tissue, it is critical to seek medical attention after suspected exposure to NO₂. Permanent lung damage can occur within minutes of exposure.

It has already been 10 days since harvesting, is the risk gone?

Yes and no. In short, the biggest risk for NO₂ exposure is within the early phases of ensiling. However, there could be some lingering gases beyond 10 days.

Furthermore, excessive nitrates in forages pose a significant health risk to animals. Not all nitrates will be converted to NO₂. Upon feed-out, remaining nitrates in silage are also converted to nitrites in the bloodstream post-absorption which can bind to hemoglobin and reduce the oxygen carrying capacity. Acute nitrate toxicity can cause serious issues to health and performance. If there is suspicion of higher nitrates in forages, or observed NO₂ production after harvest, it is strongly

recommended to test the silage for nitrate levels. Adjust inclusion rates depending on the nitrate levels.

For reference, nitrate levels above 1.5-per-cent DM are toxic for animals. Prolonged ensiling times can reduce nitrate content, and it is recommended to ensile forages for one month prior to feeding. Regardless, nitrate levels should still be evaluated prior to feed-out if issues are suspected.

What about carbon dioxide (CO₂)?

Although carbon dioxide (CO₂) is not as dangerous as NO₂, it is still a notable risk. CO₂ is odourless and colourless (hence, silent but deadly). Under some conditions, this gas can be observed around silos as a "shimmer" or "haze," much like watching heat rising from an open oven.

CO₂ can originate from several different types of bacteria and yeasts, including lactic acid bacteria (the "good guys").

Generally, the risk for CO₂ from silage is low but not null. Similar advice applies, although CO₂ exposure risk increases with silage stored under closed conditions (example: tower silos with attached feed rooms). If this applies, take appropriate precautions. Regardless of silo type, always listen to your body. Step away from the silos if you begin to feel light-headed or start to cough.



Cookin' with the Advocate

Carrot Cake



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

This carrot cake might – just might – be better than your trusted carrot cake recipe.

CARROT CAKE INGREDIENTS

2 cups flour
2 teaspoons baking soda
1 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons cinnamon
1 teaspoon grated nutmeg
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon ground cloves
1½ cups sugar
1 cup softened/slightly melted butter
4 eggs
1¼ pounds grated carrots (1½ lbs before peeling), or 4 cups walnuts (optional)

CREAM CHEESE ICING INGREDIENTS

8 ounces cream cheese
¾ cup unsalted butter
1 cup sifted icing sugar
½ teaspoon vanilla

PREPARATION

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.

Sift all dry ingredients and spices together.

In a mixer, beat butter with sugar until fluffy, add eggs one at a time, beating between each addition. Gently beat in carrots. On low or by hand, incorporate dry ingredients.

Turn into buttered and floured pans, either two nine-inch round pans, or a Bundt pan.

If using the nine-inch pans, bake for about 35 minutes, until the top springs back when touched and a toothpick inserted comes out clean.

If using a Bundt pan, you will need to bake for 60-70 minutes.

The best dessert recipes are results of a little meddling

Cynthia Gunn
QFA's Food Writer

You already have a carrot cake recipe, no doubt. It's probably pretty darn good, no doubt. But this one might, just might, be better.

The first version of this recipe entered our home when I was a teenager. That's a good number of decades ago now. I'm no longer sure exactly what the original version looked like, as it has been tinkered with over the years, especially when it came into my hands. Mom was a follower of recipes as they were written. I, on the other hand, am not. At least, I see no reason not to tinker after you've tried it once as written and believe it would be more to your liking if you meddled.

The first point of meddling in sweets is always the sugar. I find most desserts too sweet, and have a strong belief that, in most cases, this is a cover-up for inferior ingredients. In other instances, it is simply a preference. Too much sweetness is cloying and not satisfying to my tastes.

And I'm not alone.

The other week I served this cake to a gathering of six or seven, where one exclaimed how good the icing was. The general consensus was the balance of sugar was pretty spot on. Try it with the amounts given here, and you can always add more.

The original version of this recipe called for oil, not butter. I stopped using oil in baking after a period of study some years ago on the health properties of different fats, and changes to them when exposed to heat. At that time, I chose to substitute butter for oil, which I would use in any other cake anyway. The "jury" still seems to be undecided on fats generally, and when used in baking and cooking, and I've not got the desire or patience to wade back into that tangle of narratives.

As for the walnuts, if it were just me I would smother the whole cake in walnuts. Usually I don't put any on because there seems to always be someone with a nut allergy, or someone who doesn't like walnuts. I see no problem with placing a pretty dish of walnuts on the serving table, which allows people to add them to their plate as they wish.

Finally, here is a report on experiments mentioned in past articles.

Question: Can you make up a batch of the corn starch, water and cheese base for *Cacio e Pepe* to use later?

Answer: Absolutely. It worked perfectly after four days in the fridge.

Question: And can you freeze the fried mashed potatoes with goats cheese?

Answer: Sort of. They don't hold together too well once defrosted, so take care as you get them into the hot pan. Next time I may only partly defrost them to make it easier to slip them into the pan, and after they are crisp on the outside, try leaving them on low heat for 15 minutes to ensure that they warm through.

Question: And the carrot cake?

Answer: It freezes perfectly for up to four months. It can be frozen, wrapped tightly, with or without the icing. The icing can be made and added when you want to serve the cake.

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



The Classifieds

YOUR COMMUNITY MARKETPLACE
REACHING ALL OF QUEBEC'S ENGLISH-SPEAKING FARMERS

WANTED

Purebred Highland calves, 0-2 years old. I will provide transport. I would also be interested in ongoing annual purchases as well. Call John Badger, 450-405-7738. Thank you.

FOR SALE

Horse hay, small bales first and second cut. Timothy/Brome mix. Also available: round wrapped bales, semi dry, and 3x3x7 dry square bales. Dunham area. Text: 514-952-8178.

Case 780D loader backhoe with extendahoe: This big brother to the CASE 580 is ready to work for you with only 6,000 hours. The two-yard loader and extendahoe are matched to the CASE turbocharged 124 hp six cylinder (4x4). Filters and fluids replaced. Interested? Call 819-459-3411 or email wakefieldkindling@gmail.com \$24,900.

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

SERVICES

QCNA offers a one-order, one-bill service to advertisers. Call us for details on reaching English Quebec, and through classified ads French Quebec and every other Canadian province and territory. 819-893-6330.

HELP WANTED

Want person to contact animal farmers about our new lower cost natural animal vitamins, pure@bell.net

FOR QFA MEMBERS

DO YOU NEED SOMETHING TRANSLATED? Translate English to French or French to English. No job is too big or too small! QFA members automatically get a 10% discount with additional rebates available to return customers. Call us at 450-679-0540, ext.8536 or e-mail: qfa_translation@upa.qc.ca



BOOK YOUR AD TODAY:
E-mail: qfa@upa.qc.ca
Place the words “Advocate ads” in the subject line.

BEST VALUE:
Members receive 3 classified ads FREE.

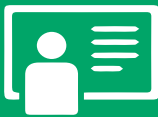
QFA OFFERS TRANSLATION SERVICES



ADVERTISEMENTS



REPORTS



PRESENTATIONS



WEBSITES &
SOCIAL MEDIA



PRESS RELEASES &
NEWSLETTERS

FRENCH-ENGLISH AND ENGLISH-FRENCH TRANSLATION

- Anyone can use it!
- QFA members get 10% off automatically
- Free quotes
- 5% discount for UPA affiliates (e.g. producer groups, regional federations, local syndicates)

CONTACT QFA_TRANSLATION@UPA.QC.CA

The QFA has a new website!

Quebec farming news

Events you might be interested in

Details about upcoming online Farm Forums

Information about the Quebec Farmers' Association

IT'S ALL THERE.

<https://quebecfarmers.org/>

Check it out.

Let us know what you would like to see there.

Contact us by email: qfa@upa.qc.ca

Contact us by phone: 514-246-2981

