



WHAT'S INSIDE

Expropriation estimates for Alto raise alarm
Page 3

When big farms fail, entire sector flinches
Page 6

How UPA dues will soon be calculated
Page 7

Emissions on Canadian farms remain steady
Page 13

“Now more than ever we need to protect and grow our agri-food sector.”

— Trevor Jones, Ontario’s minister of agriculture, on April 21 as he announced his government will propose legislation to limit foreign ownership of farmland in the province

QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

Wednesday, May 27
at 7:30 p.m.

Pastured Lamb for Meat and Fibre

See page 16 for details.



MCGILL UNIVERSITY/INSTAGRAM

The \$24.4-million greenhouse complex includes seven independently controlled bays, labs and classrooms.

New Mac greenhouse to expand climate research

Joshua Allan
The Advocate
Local Journalism Initiative

McGill University cut the ribbon on a spacious greenhouse at its Macdonald Campus in Ste. Anne de Bellevue in April, calling the new facility an encouraging step forward in the school’s agricultural and environmental research capabilities.

The \$24.4-million project includes seven independently controlled greenhouse bays, as well as laboratories and a classroom. The temperatures of

each of the greenhouse bays can be adjusted to accommodate plants from various climates and ecosystems, enabling students and researchers to study how these plants react and can adapt to changing environmental conditions.

“The research we do here will help safeguard eastern Canadian agriculture in the face of a changing climate,” professor Anja Geitmann, McGill’s vice-president of Global Engagement and former dean of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, said in a statement.

See GREENHOUSE, Page 12.

Winds of change

The battle over where to put windmills

The Advocate

Hydro-Québec and the *Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec* struck a deal in principle last month aimed at better regulating the placement of wind turbines on Quebec farmland. But critics say the deal falls far short of what farmers and environmentalists were demanding, and Hydro’s massive wind expansion is proceeding on schedule regardless.

On April 10, Hydro-Québec formally launched a new call for tenders for wind energy procurement, targeting between 1,500 and 3,000 megawatts of new installed capacity, with projects expected to come online between 2031 and 2038. The announcement came alongside news of the agreement with the UPA – a deal the farmers’ union president Martin Caron described as having been “concluded at the last minute.”

Twelve areas in the province have been identified as technically suitable for Hydro’s wind energy expansion projects, where turbines – large-scale industrial structures, with towers of 80 to 110 meters in height, roughly the stretch of a 20-storey building – will be installed. These areas are concentrated heavily in the agricultural heartland south of the St. Lawrence River.

Although it is not clear how many turbines will be installed to meet Hydro’s targets, it is expected to include multiple sites with hundreds of turbines, bringing the total number of windmills into the thousands.

According to the UPA, “these are major infrastructures that will mark the agricultural zone for years to come, with a significant environmental liability to consider.”

Read the FULL STORY on Pages 4 and 5.



Just the facts

\$13.3 billion

That is the value of Quebec's agri-food exports in 2025. The figure represents a 5-per-cent increase compared with 2024 overall, and a 4-per-cent jump in exports to the U.S. market.

Source: Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

\$558 million

That is the value of Quebec's chicken and egg exports to all foreign markets in 2025. The figure represents a 14-per-cent drop compared with 2024. Last year, 93 per cent of Quebec's chicken and egg exports went to the U.S. This biggest single market saw a 16-per-cent decrease.

Source: Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

\$260 million

That is the value of Quebec's beef exports to all foreign markets in 2025. The figure represents a 22-per-cent increase compared with 2024. Last year, 94 per cent of Quebec's beef exports went to the U.S. This biggest single market saw a 21-per-cent jump.

Source: Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

\$1.85 billion

That is the value of Quebec's pork exports to all foreign markets in 2025. The figure represents a 1-per-cent increase compared with 2024. Last year, 33 per cent of Quebec's pork exports went to the U.S. This biggest single market saw an 8-per-cent hike.

Source: Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food



MADELEINE LANGLOIS, THE ADVOCATE

If you are a baseball fan, it's Blue Jays season. But if you're not, it's still blue jays season. Just ask these guys, sitting pretty in a tree without anything to do. They all look alike, but are all slightly different. In fact, the black bridle across the face, nape and throat of a blue jay varies extensively, which is the distinctive characteristic that helps them recognize one another.



Mission

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

Vision

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

Shared Values

Members of the QFA believe in:

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

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Alto high-speed train: Expropriations estimates raise alarm

1,700 properties – including 500 farms – could be touched in Montreal-Ottawa corridor

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate
Local Journalism Initiative

Opposition to the proposed Alto high-speed rail line between Quebec City and Toronto is gaining steam in the agricultural sector as officials behind the transportation mega-project have revealed new details about the number of farms the tracks might touch.

In an interview with Radio-Canada in early May, Martin Imbleau, the president and CEO of Alto, the authority in charge of the development and implementation of the rail line, said the track would cross about 1,700 properties in the Montreal-Ottawa stretch that would run for about 200 kilometres north of the island of Montreal into Ontario. This would include at least 500 farms.

"We are much further along on the first segment between Montreal and Ottawa," Imbleau told Radio-Canada. "The engineering is starting to take shape."

This admission has raised concern as

to the scope and scale of the impact on farms across the rail line's entire projected course.

In early May, the *Union des producteurs agricoles* released a statement sounding the alarm.

"Does this mean that the entire route (1,000 kilometres) could affect 8,500 properties, including 2,500 farms? That's almost three times more properties than the 3,126 expropriation notices for Mirabel Airport," the UPA stated.

The UPA is clear in its stand against the project, describing its opposition as "unanimous," with farmers from the four regions the rail line is projected to carve its way through – the Capitale-Nationale-Côte-Nord region, in the Quebec City area; the Mauricie region, between Quebec City and Montreal; the Lanaudière area, north of Montreal; and the Outaouais-Laurentides, northwest of Montreal to the Ontario border – having condemned the project and calling its impact on the province's farmland a scar.

The list of grievances with the project



DENIS BELITSKY/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The Alto high-speed rail project could cross 1,700 properties along the 200-kilometre stretch from Montreal-Ottawa, including about 500 farms, according to reports.

outlined by the UPA is long: "The fragmentation and breakup of agricultural and forestry operations, hindering operational efficiency and increasing operating costs indefinitely; the loss of direct access to certain agricultural parcels, forcing producers to make significant detours with machinery, or even to sell off part of their farm; and the consequences for surface water runoff and agricultural drainage systems, essential to land productivity."

Concerns were also raised for the forestry sector.

"The direct consequences for maple groves and private woodlots must also be considered, including the loss of productive land; the fragmentation of forest stands, hindering silvicultural and maple syrup production planning; increased constraints on the movement of forestry machinery and the maintenance of access roads; the risk of unauthorized use of access roads along the property line; and the cumulative effects on the economic and social vitality of rural communities," the UPA said.

In eastern Ontario, town hall meetings have been attracting crowds in the hundreds, with residents expressing a chorus of issues with the project, they say, will adversely affect their communities.

On May 6, about 200 people gathered in Casselman, Ont., a town of about 4,000 people located between the Quebec border and Ottawa, in an area the train line is projected to cut through. Among the issues raised were the fear

of property expropriations and the long-term viability of the rail project.

Among the speakers in Casselman was Robert Charron, a municipal councillor from the Town of Mirabel, a community well acquainted with the fallout of large-scale expropriations for the construction of the now defunct Mirabel airport.

Charron urged residents to make efforts to involve others who live outside the projected train corridor to get informed, as they may not fully understand what the impacts of the project will have on affected communities.

Demonstrations against the train have also been held in other eastern Ontario communities, including several earlier this spring in Chute à Blondeau, near the Quebec border, and in the Mirabel area.

The Alto project would see a 1,000-kilometre rail line along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River from Quebec City to Toronto, which will cross through Trois Rivières, Laval, and the west end of the province, cutting through eastern Ontario farm country to Ottawa, Peterborough and Toronto.

According to Alto, the development phase will continue until 2029-2030. It will then be presented to the federal government for approval. Construction will then roll out in phases, each lasting between eight and 10 years.

The section between Quebec City and Toronto will be 60 meters wide. Ground-breaking for the Montreal-Ottawa section is scheduled for 2029.

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News

Winds of change: The evolution of wind power in Quebec

1975

Initial work begins at the Hydro-Québec Research Institute (IREQ) with the installation of a 40-kW vertical-axis wind turbine. This turbine is no longer in operation.

1977

Installation of a 230-kW experimental vertical-axis wind turbine in the Magdalen Islands through a collaboration between the National Research Council of Canada (NRC) and IREQ. This wind turbine is no longer in operation.

1986

Installation of a 65-kW horizontal-axis wind turbine in Kuujuaq (off-grid system). The turbine has since been dismantled. It is now used for training at the *Cégep de la Gaspésie et des Îles*.

1987

The Éole experimental project, utilizing a 4 MW vertical-axis wind turbine with a rotor height of 96 metres and a hub diameter of 64 metres. This project was conducted in collaboration with the NRC. The wind turbine operated commercially from March 1988 to April 1993, producing approximately 12,000 MWh. This wind turbine is no longer in operation.

1987

Tests on wind-diesel hybrid systems begin at the Atlantic Wind Testing Centre in Prince Edward Island.

1995

In collaboration with the Quebec Ministry of Natural Resources (MRN), the Université du Québec à Rimouski and the consulting firm Wind Economics and Technology Inc. (WECTEC) develop a wind map based on known data to determine Quebec's wind energy potential.

1997

Launch of Hydro-Québec's wind measurement program specifically focused on wind power generation, featuring four towers. Concurrently, the MRN installed additional wind measurement towers.

1998

Transfer of responsibility for the entire wind measurement program to the MRN.

1998

Commercial commissioning of the first phase of the *Énergie Le Nordais*

project in Cap-Chat along the Gaspé coast. It includes 76 wind turbines, each with a capacity of 750 kW.

1999

Commercial commissioning of the second phase of the *Énergie Le Nordais* project in Matane, consisting of 57 wind turbines, each with a capacity of 750 kW.

2001

Transfer to Hydro-Québec of the Matane wind test bed, consisting of three 750-kW wind turbines.

2001

Publication of Hydro-Québec's 2002–2006 Strategic Plan, indicating that the company intends to support the development of wind energy potential in Quebec through a targeted procurement program of up to 100 MW per year.

2002–2004

Hydro-Québec Production signs power purchase agreements for wind-generated electricity with private producers, totalling nearly 500 MW. Hydro-Québec Production thus plays a pioneering role.

2003

Following a decision made on March 5, 2003 by the government of Quebec, Hydro-Québec Distribution is launched in May 2003, with an initial call for tenders to acquire 1,000 MW of power generated by wind turbines. The contracts are awarded in October 2003. The selection process prioritizes the lowest unit cost, including transmission.

2005

Hydro-Québec Distribution launches a second call for tenders to acquire 2,000 MW of wind power.

2008

Contracts are awarded under the second call for tenders to acquire 2,000 MW of wind power.

2009

Hydro-Québec Distribution launches a call for tenders to acquire two separate blocks of 250 MW of electricity generated by wind turbines, one from Indigenous projects and the other from community projects, for a total installed capacity of 500 MW.

Source: Hydro-Québec

Hydro and UPA reach

Agreement discourages turbines on best farmland, but stops short of moratorium demanded by UPA

Andrew McClelland

The Advocate

Local Journalism Initiative

Hydro-Québec and the Union des producteurs agricoles du Québec struck a deal in principle last month aimed at better regulating the placement of wind turbines on Quebec farmland. But critics say the deal falls far short of what farmers and environmentalists were demanding, and Hydro's massive wind expansion is proceeding on schedule regardless.

On April 10, Hydro-Québec formally launched a new call for tenders

for wind energy procurement, targeting between 1,500 and 3,000 megawatts of new installed capacity, with projects expected to come online between 2031 and 2038. The announcement came alongside news of the agreement with the UPA – a deal the farmers' union president Martin Caron described as having been “concluded at the last minute.”

In late March, the UPA had been at the forefront of a growing coalition demanding Hydro suspend its wind power call for tenders before it was launched. Alongside CUPE-Québec, the citizens' group Regroupement



Where the turbines will be installed

Hydro-Québec's new call for tenders, launched April 10, targets 1,500 and 3,000 MW of new wind capacity, with projects to be commissioned between 2031 and 2038. The tender runs in three rounds; the deadline for first-round bids is Feb. 26, 2027.

Twelve geographic areas have been identified as technically suitable, concentrated heavily in the agricultural heartland south of the St. Lawrence River. These include the South Shore of Montreal, Montérégie, Centre-du-Québec, the Eastern Townships, Chaudière-Appalaches and Lanaudière.

Specific locations identified include Bécancour, Sorel-Tracy, Contrecoeur,

Varennes and Beauharnois.

Each turbine's ground footprint – including access roads and electrical collection lines – is estimated by Hydro at approximately one hectare (100 metres by 100 metres).

Hydro has noted that the inclusion of a zone on its integration map does not guarantee projects will proceed if community opposition persists. Social acceptability, the utility said, “changes over time.”

Farmers whose land falls within a targeted zone retain the right to refuse. The UPA communiqué is clear on this: land rights for wind farms are negotiated privately between developers and landowners, with no power of expropriation.

deal on wind turbines – but the fight isn't over

vigilance énergie Québec (RVÉQ), and the advocacy group *Vent d'élus*, the UPA was warning hundreds of turbines were about to be planted in the province's most productive agricultural zones, threatening food security on land that is already under severe pressure.

"The pressure on agricultural land is significant and constant," Caron said at the time. "Over the past 10 years, more than 17,000 hectares of farmland have been sacrificed to urban sprawl, financial and real estate speculators, industrial projects and infrastructure construction."

He and other critics argued Quebec farmers have access to only 2 per cent of the land needed to ensure food security – compared with 58 per cent in France and 45 per cent in the United States.

What the agreement actually says

The deal has three components, according to an internal UPA memo sent April 14 to members of the organization's expanded general council. The first is an update to the existing reference framework governing the siting of wind farms on agricultural and forest land. The second is the addition of a financial penalty applied to bids from developers who want to locate turbines on the best farmland. The third is a financial contribution from Hydro-Québec to the UPA's fund for agricultural succession.

On the reference framework, Hydro agreed to several concrete changes sought by the UPA: concrete turbine foundations must be buried to a depth of at least two metres when wind farms are decommissioned; developers – not landowners – will be responsible for maintaining permanent access roads used to operate and service turbines and collection networks; option contracts for land rights will be capped at a maximum duration of 60 months; and the financial amounts offered to landowners must be indexed when surface-rights deeds are renewed. Hydro also agreed to limit landowner civil liability for damage to wind farm infrastructure to a maximum of \$2 million per incident.

The penalty mechanism is a first, the UPA memo notes. According to the memo, "this is the first time Hydro-Québec has agreed to add such a criterion. In previous calls for tenders, no criterion aimed to limit the use of agricultural land for the siting of wind farms."

The penalty takes the form of

a maximum charge of \$5 per megawatt-hour for projects on the most productive land and in maple groves. The scale slides down based on soil class: \$4/MWh for Class 3 soils, \$3/MWh for Class 4, \$2/MWh for Class 5, and \$1/MWh for Class 6 or 7. No penalty applies for projects outside agricultural zones. The UPA memo says the penalty "should carry enough weight to steer wind farms away from active agricultural zones," but also acknowledges that its true effectiveness will only be measurable after the first round of bids is assessed.

As for the financial contribution, Hydro agreed to pay \$12,500 per megawatt of installed capacity for turbines located in agricultural zones, with the money going to the UPA's fund for agricultural succession. No payment will be made for turbines located outside agricultural zones – a provision Caron noted would make developers and Hydro-Québec "think twice" before siting projects on farmland, since doing so will carry a cost.

Neither party disclosed an overall dollar figure, since the total amount will depend on how many megawatts ultimately end up in agricultural zones.

A concession with real limits

Whether this constitutes a meaningful concession by Hydro is open to question. Crucially, the agreement does not ban turbines from agricultural land. It adjusts the scoring formula to create financial pressure on developers to prioritize other sites, but it does not close any zone.

The Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec (CPTAQ) must still approve any wind project on agricultural land – a safeguard that already existed before the deal.

The UPA memo is explicit on this point, noting that the agreement "in no way modifies the authorization process" under the CPTAQ, and that individual project approvals remain required.

The UPA's memo also acknowledges the hard reality underlying the deal: "These are major infrastructures that will mark the agricultural zone for years to come, with a significant environmental liability to consider."

Most tellingly, the call for tenders the UPA had been demanding be suspended was not suspended. Hydro launched it the day after the agreement was signed. Caron reiterated his demand for a Bureau d'audiences



VOLKER RAUCH/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE) even as he welcomed the deal – a signal that in his own view, the agreement did not resolve the UPA's deeper objections. The memo states the UPA "continues to demand" such a review, and warns that the organization will remain "extremely vigilant" as the first round of bids unfolds.

Hydro's statements to media have been cautious and tight-lipped. Vice-president Mathieu Johnson – who is responsible for wind energy at the provincially-owned corporation – said overseers are focusing on areas where wind power projects can be integrated "quickly" into the grid, "without major investments."

The expansion rolls on

The scale of what is being planned is enormous. Quebec currently has 45 wind farms in operation, with an installed capacity of approximately 4,000 MW. Hydro-Québec's goal is to add 10,000 MW of new wind power by 2035 – enough to supply more than 2 million households.

Regarding Hydro's target of installing 1,500 and 3,000 megawatts of new energy during the current call for tenders, Johnson suggested the province would consider a variety of social factors before deciding on the exact amount.

"It could be less. It could be more,"

Johnson stated. "It will depend on the competitiveness of the projects, social acceptability in the host communities, and the industry's response."

The new call for tenders will be conducted in three rounds, giving developers and local communities more time for public consultations and allowing projects to be tailored to local conditions. Bids must demonstrate clear municipal support, and developers will be required to conduct public consultations before submitting proposals. Projects will also be required to make annual financial contributions to host communities.

Premier François Legault has made clear the expansion is not slowing down. In late March, he officially launched construction of the Des Neiges wind farm in Charlevoix – two phases comprising 114 turbines capable of generating 800 MW, with a potential third phase that could bring the project to 1,200 MW and make it the largest wind farm in Canada.

For Caron and the UPA, the agreement in principle is a partial victory – proof, they say, that going public with their opposition accelerated negotiations. But when they called for a moratorium, they got a scoring penalty and a land-rehabilitation clause. The turbines are coming. The question is exactly where they will land – and whether a \$5-per-megawatt-hour charge will be enough to keep them off Quebec's best soil.



FACEBOOK.COM

Saskatchewan-based Monette Farms, one of the largest farms in North America, is undergoing a court-ordered restructuring after filing for creditor protection. Its rapid and extensive expansion should serve as a cautionary tale.



John McCart
QFA President

Late last month, I started to see news reports that one of the largest farms in North America had filed for creditor protection. Monette Farms Ltd., based in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, was in big trouble. When the fail is this big, the reports are everywhere.

Darrel Monette, who is the president and CEO of the farm, took over the reigns of the business in 2013, and, through rapid expansion, grew the farm to more than 400,000 acres of owned and rented land, with operations in four provinces as well as the United States. The products that he grows include grain, seed, beef and produce in Arizona.

One of the first clues that I saw that he was in trouble was that a subsidiary of Monette Farms, Monette Seeds Ltd., which operates a grain elevator, failed

Bigger is not always better

When large farms fail, the entire sector suffers

to secure the renewal of its primary elevator licence from the Canadian Grain Commission. This came shortly after the Monette farm group of companies filed for creditor protection on April 21.

I had followed their operation with interest on Facebook and Instagram over the last few years, and I was always impressed by the way the farm conducted business and took care of its employees. The company had amassed a value of \$1.24 billion, and liabilities of \$1.08 billion!

What happened?

At the start, expansion was easy. It was fuelled by low interest rates and easy financing. As I have mentioned before, there is no shortage of farms to buy in western Canada given the lack of farm transitions within families.

At a certain point, it seems that only the large farms can grow, as banks and other lending institutions wish to see farms prosper.

But a couple of years ago, with the

increase in interest rates, cracks in the Monette Farms business plan started to show. After years of rapid expansion, over leverage and a shift in lending, there were increases in input costs, prices dropped and nasty weather sealed the farm's fate.

The impact of this restructuring is enormous.

Monette Farms regularly employed about 450 people, a number that would increase to about 600 during harvest season. A lot of people and communities depend on the work. And that dependence was one of the reasons for an emergency \$90-million aid program to put in the 2026 crop.

As of today, the farm is not bankrupt, but it is undergoing a court-supervised restructuring.

I understand that a farm needs to grow to remain competitive. However, there are limits that cannot be overcome. I am used to hearing about large farms in the West with 20,000, 30,000, even 40,000 acres, but 10 times that

scale is difficult to comprehend.

The same thing is happening in the dairy industry in the United States, with almost the same effect. Very large farms that milk 5,000, 10,000 or even 20,000 cows are struggling with low milk prices brought about with over-supply. How long can these farms survive with the gate price at less than the cost of production?

After putting all the smaller dairy farms out of business, the bigger ones will fall hard.

There seems to be a limit to the benefit of the quantities of scale can do for the bottom line of any farm enterprise. I hope this trend can reverse itself before the banks and machinery companies become the real farm owners.

Higher interest rates, geo-politics, market price and the weather play a large role in the success of a farm.

All of this points to one thing that is clear: Supply management can stabilize the revenue, no matter the size of the farm, and it must be protected at all costs.

All farmers must declare income under new UPA dues structure

Brenda O'Farrell

The Advocate
Local Journalism Initiative

As part of the *Union des producteurs agricoles'* roll-out of its new financing plan and how it charges dues to farmers, all agricultural producers across the province this month have been sent a form to formally declare their farms' revenues.

The declaration – which arrives by mail, includes an online link and unique passcode for each farm business – is mandatory and must be completed and submitted by June 30. It permits each farmer to self-declare their gross farm income for the year. This figure, in turn, will be used to calculate how much each farm business will be assessed for UPA dues in the following year. A new declaration will have to be submitted each year moving forward.

The process was initiated as part of the UPA's goal to change the way it assess dues. It is a move, the organization has

said, that responds to requests from producers to make the dues system more equitable for all farm businesses.

Among the biggest change is how the annual amount a farmer must pay in UPA dues is calculated. Under the current system, the fee structure is tied to the legal structure of the farm business – such as an incorporation, SENC or single proprietorship – with a flat rate assessed for each, plus an additional charge based on what the UPA terms a joint plan, which applies to operations that benefit from specific marketing plans for a wide variety of subsectors, such as beef, pork and grains.

Beginning in 2027, the dues will be determined based on a farm operation's revenues. A base amount will be assessed to each farm according to which of two categories their revenues fall into. For farms with revenues below \$100,000, the base amount will be pegged at \$450 per year, while operations with revenues of \$100,000 or more will be charged \$980 a year (See Chart 1).

An additional supplementary assessment will be charged to farms that generate at least 25 per cent of their gross income from products that are not subject to their contributions. These supplementary assessments range from \$50 to \$2,500 per year, depending on overall revenues. (See Chart 2).

This supplementary assessment has been created, according to the UPA, to include farm operations that are not covered by a joint plan. Under the current system, farms that are not part of a joint plan do not pay any additional fees. The change, therefore, aims to provide "greater equity among farms, taking into account whether or not they contribute to the UPA through a joint plan," the organization has explained in a statement.

In the meanwhile, all assessments under joint plans remain in place.

Why now?

The UPA has made it clear, the aim in changing the way it calculates its dues

assessment is not to increase the organization's revenues. Rather, to ensure that operations outside of joint plans contribute to the financing plan, and to provide greater equity among farming operations.

Making a revenue declaration

All farm operations must submit their declaration of gross revenues by June 30. Once a producer has received their notice by mail, the declaration can be registered online, on paper by completing a form and submitting by mail or by phone by contacting the UPA directly.

If a farm fails to file a declaration, reminders will be sent. If the declaration is still not filed, the UPA will assign the operation to an income tier.

Examples of supplementary assessments

Farm with \$50,000 in gross income

- Large game production: \$35,000 (70% of total income not subject to UPA contributions)
- Maple production: \$15,000 (30% of total income subject to UPA contributions)

Since 25% or more of the farm's income is generated from products not covered by a joint plan, the assessment increase (for \$35,000, which is between \$0 and \$99,999.99) would be \$50.

Farm with \$360,000 in gross income

- \$225,000 from cattle production and \$75,000 from grain production (83% of total income subject to UPA contributions)
- Strawberry production: \$60,000 (17% of total income not subject to UPA contributions)

Since less than 25% of the income is generated by products not covered by a joint plan, the assessment increase would not apply.

Source: UPA

Chart 1

Tier	Gross farm income	Base assessment
1	\$0 to \$99,999.99	\$450
2	\$100,000.00 or more	\$980

Each farm must declare which income bracket, or tier, it falls into. This chart shows the corresponding base assessment fee it will be charged.

Chart 2

Tier	Gross farm income from PNACs	Assessment increase ("supplementary assessment")
1	\$0 to \$99,999.99	\$50
2	\$100,000 to \$249,999.99	\$175
3	\$250,000 to \$499,999.99	\$375
4	\$500,000 to \$999,999.99	\$750
5	\$1 million to \$1,999,999.99	\$1,500
6	\$2 millions or more	\$2,500

COURTESY OF UPA

An additional supplementary assessment will be charged to farms that generate at least 25 per cent of their gross income from products that are not subject to their contributions. These supplementary assessments range from \$50 to \$2,500 per year, depending on overall revenues.

Trends in agriculture



Chris Judd
The Advocate

A couple decades ago, I had a stroke while in my doctor's office. There was no warning, no signs. It turned out to be a life-altering experience.

Within minutes, I was in the emergency ward at the Shawville hospital, which is only a half-mile away from my doctor's office. Doctors and nurses surrounded me.

When I came to, I could hear a couple of doctors chatting outside my door in the ER. This was all happening a short time after a new "clot buster" drug became available, which could dissolve the clots that cause a stroke. Strokes are usually caused by either a clot, which blocks blood from going to parts of the brain, or a "bleed" in the brain, a ruptured blood vessel in the brain. If a stroke is caused by a clot, and the new clot-breaking drug is administered quickly, the clot disappears and the stroke ceases, causing little or no permanent damage to the brain. But, if the stroke is caused by a bleed and the clot-breaking drug is administered, the patient can bleed to death within minutes.

Whether the stroke is caused by a bleed or a clot can only be determined with an MRI or a scan. Since our hospital didn't have an MRI machine and the scanner was inoperative at that time, the only option was sending me to a hospital in Hull, but that might take too much time. If I had a clot, the clot-busting drug needed to be administered quickly.

The doctors chatting outside my door had already assessed me for damage. I still had feeling in both sides of my body (but the left side had less feeling). I could still speak and move all my right side. After a thorough discussion outside my door, the very brilliant doctors decided to not take a chance. A bleed could very well be the cause of my stroke. They decided to just let me rest until everything stabilized.

Doctors saved my life

After a couple trips to Hull a week later, the MRI showed that I had had a small bleed near the base of my skull. Those very smart doctors who chatted outside my door had saved my life.

I then realized what was important in my life, was really important. And

Without warning, you learn what is really important

It's a lesson all farmers should learn sooner, rather than later



SUPAWAT BURSUK/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Teach young people to make decision while they are still young, and while you are still by their side offering guidance.

I decided to not worry about what I had no control over. That is when I suddenly realized that most of my worries were gone.

My family and friends have always been important, but after lying on my back not knowing what the future would bring, I thought about what my family and friends had taught me and what I had passed on to them.

Teaching family, friends and valued employees how to do everything you can do not only allows you more time to think and plan, it prepares them to continue doing important, timely jobs after you cannot.

Young people need to learn to make decisions

Let young people make decisions when they are still young. Too many young people don't get to make decisions (good or bad) while they are young. If they only start making those choices when their decision-making parents are

gone, suddenly those big expensive decisions not only put unbearable stress on them, but it can negatively impact the future of the farm.

A few days ago, a good friend of mine told me about the 2-2-and-2 rule: Two minutes without air, you die. Two days without water, you die. Two weeks without food, you die.

Sure, some people break that rule, but how are they physically or mentally after?

When we watch our politicians make decisions that do nothing to improve our air quality; when we watch our streams, lakes, rivers and oceans get polluted with chemical residue, forever chemicals or micro-plastics; when we watch acres of prime farmland used for buildings, roads, parking lots or dumps; when our governments allow poisonous chemical residues that kill the human "biome," how long will your descendants live?

What is really important in our lives?

What we do is important

Yes, I've flown on a plane that spews more pollution than all the cows burping and farting in our county. Yes, I wash my car at a car wash. Yes, we have built a barn on No. 3 farmland. But a modern barn can be built with zero wash water, phosphate soap or copper sulphate, unlike a basic foot bath that gets dumped down the drain. Everything is recycled in the manure lagoon and spread on the fields reducing the need for fertilizer and brings much needed water to the crops. Dairy farmers of Canada have promised to become carbon neutral by 2030. Some are almost there. A farmer taking a vacation, perhaps combining a little trip with an educational visit or conference to further his or her education about more efficient production and improve their mental health is something to consider.

Ask yourself: What is really important in your life?



New chapter in long legacy of Howick Ayrshire farm

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate
 Local Journalism Initiative

Madison Peddie has a go-to story that explains exactly how she fell in love with dairy farming. She was barely tall enough to carry a bucket.

"My first chores were feeding calves with my Grandpa," the 18-year-old said. "I would struggle to carry the bucket of milk, but I was proud to be involved and get to work with cows that were my size."

During those early-morning sessions, her grandfather, Ross Peddie, would fill the time with stories and lessons. One exchange in particular stuck with her.

"I asked him, 'Grandpa, why don't we keep the horns on the cows any more?'" Peddie said, laughing at the memory.

"He laughed and said, 'Because they would put two holes in your stomach!'"

"Him including me, and feeding my curiosity, is what made my passion for dairy farming grow."

First woman to take the helm

Those mornings in the calf barn set Peddie on a path that runs deep in her family's history. She's a first-year student in the Farm Management and Technology (FMT) program at Macdonald Campus. She plans to become the seventh generation of her family to work the land in Howick, Que. – and the first woman to take the helm of Smithburn Ayrshires.

The roots of Smithburn Farm stretch back to 1822, when the Peddie family first arrived in Howick. This year, the farm is celebrating its 100th anniversary under Peddie stewardship, after great-great-grandfather John S. Peddie purchased the property in 1926 to bring his son Peter home from Massachusetts, where Peter had been working at a prestigious Ayrshire operation. The breed has never left the family since.

Peddie's father, Brent, who studied at Macdonald College, eventually became a partner on the farm with his own parents and has been running it ever since.

Handling the day-to-day

Today, Smithburn milks about 70 cows and grows all its own feed. The herd is the focal point of Peddie's days when she's home from school – milking,

caring for calves and handling the genetics side of the operation, including all animal registrations and breeding decisions.

"My main focus is to breed Ayrshires that not only last long but also are stylish and can produce well," she said. "As the Ayrshire breed is slowing down, my hope is to breed animals that will influence other breeders to keep Ayrshires."

Peddie's commitment to the breed has already produced results on the show circuit. Since joining 4-H at age 9, she has shown across Quebec, competed at the TD Classic in Toronto, and travelled twice to the World Dairy Expo. Last year, one of the farm's heifers earned an honourable mention All-Canadian and Reserve All-Quebec winter yearling designation – a first for the Smithburn herd.

"It reflected the hard work we are putting in," Peddie said.

Beyond genetics and show results, Peddie has plans that extend well past the barn. One of her strongest ambitions is to work on mental-health awareness in agriculture – a cause she arrived at through painful personal experience.

In 2014, her grandfather Ross died of natural causes, leaving her father to run the farm largely on his own alongside Peddie's grandmother, Nancy. Five years later, after a battle with depression, Nancy died by suicide.

Dealing with tragedy

"Not only did we lose a loving family member, but we also lost a key pillar to Smithburn Farm," Peddie said. "Cows still had to be milked and hay still needed to get done, even though grief and the stress of learning to do things that she had done all her life with grace were in our minds."

She describes a pervasive feeling of shame that settled over the family in the aftermath – a sense that they hadn't done enough. It's an attitude she now recognizes as symptomatic of a broader problem in agricultural culture.

"There's such a strong image that farmers are like superheroes – that they're unbreakable, can work through anything, and can never be weak," Peddie said. "Even farmers themselves get that mentality, and that's what stops them from getting help. Reaching out for mental help should be as normal as going to the doctor for the flu."

After graduation, Peddie intends



MADISON PEDDIE

Madison with her father Brent Peddie after winning her class with Smithburn Precious at the Huntingdon Fair in 2023.

to advocate openly for mental-health resources in farming communities – sharing information, raising awareness and encouraging farmers to participate in training programs. She frames it not as a side project, but as a prerequisite for the industry's survival.

Farmers need proper care

"If we want to continue having some of the highest quality products, maintaining strong agricultural communities and keeping farms in business, we need to ensure that the mental and physical health of all farmers is properly taken care of," she said.

The financial pressures facing young farmers weigh on her as well. Like many of her peers, Peddie sees the rising cost of land, equipment, and inputs as one of the biggest threats to the next generation of agriculture – and she's clear-eyed about what that means for new entrants without a family farm to return to.

"The cost for everything has risen so much, and the uncertainty of the markets makes investing and keeping up with new technologies difficult," she said. "It makes many farmers question

whether it's even worth it."

For Peddie, though, the answer to that question has never really been in doubt. Her future plans include expanding the herd, building a better calf facility, and investing in new technologies to improve efficiency. She will also be taking a hoof-trimming course in the coming month – a skill she hopes to eventually perform independently across the whole Smithburn herd. Her father, she notes with a smile, has no intention of going anywhere soon.

"After school, my dad plans to still be on the farm for quite a while," she said. "He says he'd be too bored in retirement."

That overlap – the quiet hand-off between generations that happens not in a single moment, but over years of shared milking shifts and calving nights – is something Peddie understands as well as anyone. It's the same patient transfer of knowledge her grandfather offered her with a bucket of milk and a well-timed joke about horns.

With her family's farm marking its 100th anniversary this year, Peddie intends to make the next century just as worth celebrating.



Martin Caron
UPA President

Food matters more than anything else

But federal economic update offered little to Canadian producers

Federal Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne presented his economic update April 28.

The theme chosen for this update was "Canada Strong for All." As some have noted, the word "strong" appears more than 170 times in the 178-page statement – a reminder, perhaps, that repetition is often at the core of political messaging.

Champagne framed the economic update as an attempt to "chart a path forward through the fog of uncertainty." Given the volatility and uncertainty of today's economic and geo-political context, the government's cautious and

restrained approach is understandable. However, the almost complete absence of agricultural initiatives is regrettable and misguided.

The update confirms the temporary increase in the limit on interest-free advances under the Advance Payments Program (APP), which will rise to \$250,000 for the 2026 program year for all producers (except canola producers, for whom the limit will temporarily increase to \$500,000 for the 2026 program year).

Where is FCC money?

The update also notes that Farm Credit Canada and about 20 other organizations will invest up to \$7 billion in capital by 2030 to drive innovation. Yet,

one year after the announcement of an initial \$2-billion tranche, very little is known about these investments.

In short, the update offered little that addressed the needs of Canadian producers. For many, the "Canada Strong for All" theme rang somewhat hollow. Still, the agricultural sector continues to hold high expectations for the future national food security strategy, the development of which is confirmed in the update.

Suggestions reflected

The path forward outlined by Champagne for the agricultural sector is broadly reflected in the recommendations we submitted (on the same day) as part of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance pre-budget consultations for the fall 2026 budget.

As we noted during parliamentary consultations on the business risk management (BRM) programs the previous week, Canada must close the

gap between its agricultural spending (which is 1 per cent of its budget) and the global average of 2 per cent, strengthen its BRM programs (AgriStability, AgriRecovery, AgriInsurance and the APP), and provide greater investment in research, technology transfer and support programs.

The Canadian government must also introduce measures to improve conditions for agricultural workers, including support for better housing for temporary foreign workers, as well as tax measures to facilitate farm transfers and on-farm investment. Greater support for the organic sector, local farms and private forestry is also needed.

Two years ago, former Finance minister Chrystia Freeland and Champagne, who was Industry minister at that time, used the economic update to affirm that food matters more than anything else. It is time to turn that statement into action.

Credit for UPA Dues Program 2026

Revenue of \$25,000 or less

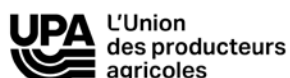
Eligibility criteria for this UPA Program:

- Must be an agricultural producer registered as a doubledues paying farm (\$952) for 2026 and expect to have a gross farm **revenue of \$25,000 or less for 2026**;
- Must be in compliance with the dues regulations and have paid dues along with any applicable interest to the UPA, including payment of single UPA dues fee for 2026, i.e., \$547.28 (\$476 plus tax);
- Must complete the application form and return it to the UPA by **October 31, 2026**;
- Must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the UPA that the gross farm revenue for 2026 was \$25,000 or less by sending us the required documents by **July 31, 2027**.

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

- on the UPA website at www.upa.qc.ca/credit-upa-dues-program
- from your regional federation
- by calling 450-679-0540, ext. 8213

You might qualify for the dues credit. Get informed!



RUSS HEINL/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

The Canadian government must improve tax measures to facilitate farm transfers and on-farm investment.



Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

The sudden appearance of hordes of meat-eating insects with wingspans up to 15 centimetres across doesn't sound like welcome news. That is because when the topic is bugs, and descriptions range from "invasion" to "infestation," it applies to bad actors: spongy-moth caterpillars that strip trees of leaves and needles, locust swarms, carpenter ants. The list of trouble-makers is long.

However, damsels and dragons are exceptions.

Damselflies and dragonflies, carnivorous insects in the Odonata order of predatory flying insects, date back more than 300 million years. Found worldwide on all continents except Antarctica, both insects eat literally tonnes of black flies, mosquitoes and deer flies each year, which accounts for their status as "good guys." Canada is home to an estimated 220 species of damsels and dragons.

As a kid, I was told that it's good fortune if one lands on you, but the good luck is probably that they terrify biting insects.

Dragonflies are powerful flyers that can be so large they might look like a bird at first glance (or these days, maybe a drone). At rest, dragonflies keep their wings outstretched, and a line of them basking in the sun makes me think of planes queuing up on a taxiway. A dragonfly's front pair of wings is longer than its two hind wings, which is one way to tell them from damselflies.

Similar but different

Damselflies are more slender than dragons, and in damsel-like fashion, fold their wings primly along their bodies while at rest. And although many dragons are colourful, damsels tend to outshine them with bright, iridescent "gowns." In some areas, damselflies are called darning needles. Even science-nerds wax poetic about these creatures, and literature is full of damselfly names like "beautiful demoiselle," and "variable dancer."

The reason that so many damsels and/or dragons can appear at once is that they often have a mass emergence from a given body of water, based on temperature. It surprised me to learn that they spend most of their life – from one to three years – as an aquatic form

Dragons and damsels: The invasion is a good thing

called a nymph, a fierce predator of the larval stages of mosquitoes, horse flies and deer flies, all of which develop underwater. Although adult dragonflies and damselflies eat lots of black fly adults on the wing, most black flies develop in fast-running water that isn't favoured by odonates.

Damsels and dragons lay their eggs right in the water or on vegetation near the edges of streams, rivers or ponds. The juveniles, called nymphs, are monster-like, with little resemblance to their parents. You can get a sense of what their choppers look like if you watch the movie *Alien*. When magnified, you can see the primary jaws of dragon and damselflies open to reveal a second and, in some species, a third set of hinged jaw-like palps. The only detail missing is Sigourney Weaver.

Emergence from water

Damsel and dragon nymphs spend between one and three years underwater, where they gobble the soft grub-like larvae of deer flies and horse flies hiding in the mud. They also munch on 'skeeter larvae near the surface, growing larger each year. Depending on the species, a dragonfly nymph can be as long as the width of your hand.

Nymphs don't pupate like caterpillars, flies and most other insects. They mature through what is called incomplete metamorphosis, drastically changing their body form without entering a pupal stage. When dragons and damsels are full-grown nymphs, they crawl from the water, anchor their "toenails" or tarsal claws into a handy log or boat dock, and open their skin along the centre of their backs.

Outdoing any sci-fi film, a graceful dragon or damsel metamorphoses from its monster-skin. After drying its new wings in the sun for a while, these killing machines fly off to eat pests, and also to mate in a precise and complex choreography. Fortunately, dragonfly and damselfly populations are not at risk, even though plenty are killed on vehicle grilles each year.

Extreme makeover

It is impressive enough that a fat, striped monarch caterpillar sews itself into a gold-flecked membrane, dissolves into green soup, and emerges two weeks later as a regal butterfly. Dragonflies, though, change within a matter of hours from a water-dwelling



MARTIN_DAVIS/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM



SEBASTIAN JANICKI/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Dragonflies (TOP) are powerful flyers that keep their wings outstretched. Their front pair of wings is longer than its two hind wings. Damselflies are more slender, and fold their wings primly along their bodies while at rest.

creature with gills into an air-gulping high-performance biplane. It's like having a muskellunge unzip its skin and step out as an osprey.

Because it is triggered by temperature, this extreme makeover happens to a particular dragonfly or damselfly species in a given pond nearly all at once. They emerge within a day or two of their age-peers, making it seem as though they materialized out of thin air, or were dropped as a group out of a plane. Some species emerge in early spring, while others have different schedules. Some even appear in the fall.

For many years I was the horticulture and natural-resources educator for Cornell Cooperative Extension of St. Lawrence County in northern New York State. Right after the first really big odonate emergence of the year, often in

late spring, I would inevitably get calls and emails from folks who were convinced New York State government, or sometimes even Cornell University, had released a plane-load of dragons and/or damsels to control biting insects.

I loved that job, but left it to be with my Canadian wife full time, moving to Canada in 2019. It turns out that some folks here also think a benevolent agency releases dragonflies each year.

In a conversation with a retired Ministry of Natural Resources biologist, he told me that he gave up trying to explain to people who called the real reason about the sudden appearance of dragonflies, and simply took credit, saying he was happy to help. Wish I had thought of that.

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

News



GREENHOUSE: Facility bolsters food security research

From Page 1

This technology helps to “ensure that our crops thrive even as our environment evolves,” Geitmann added. “This work will play a vital role in the urgent effort to ensure Canadian food security throughout the 21st century and beyond.”

At the April 9 ribbon-cutting ceremony, Geitmann was joined by McGill president and vice-chancellor Deep Saini and Faculty of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences dean Salwa Karboune, alongside Lac-Saint-Louis MP Francis Scarpaleggia and Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) vice-president Mohamad Nasser-Eddine. The bulk of the funding – \$23 million – of the \$24.4-million price tag for this new facility was provided by Quebec’s Higher Education Ministry.

The school noted the greenhouse uses sustainable technology, like LED lamps and rainwater capture to water the plants in the bays. An application for a Leadership in Energy and

Environmental Design (LEED) certification – an international recognition for environmentally responsible buildings – for the greenhouse is also in progress.

The ceremony was also used to announce the school’s planned expansion of its eastern Canadian Plant Phenotyping Platform. This platform is a set of databases and facilities used by researchers to analyze crop growth under diverse conditions, which McGill has been developing in partnership with the Université de Sherbrooke.

This platform looks to “enable researchers to accelerate the translation of plant research discoveries into applied solutions used by Canadian producers,” according to a statement by McGill.

This project has been granted \$23.8 million in funding from the CFI and Quebec’s Higher Education Ministry.

These investments will allow McGill to continue to play “a foundational role in Quebec’s agricultural sector,” the statement outlined.

SPRING TIME?



MAURENE O'FARRELL, THE ADVOCATE

The fields do not look too lush at the moment in Ormstown, in the Châteauguay Valley, but the prospect of another growing season is on the horizon – if only the temperatures could warm up some.

Agropur upgrades Beauceville plant

Frederic Serre

The Advocate

Local Journalism Initiative

The Quebec government says the province will be able to produce more milk by 2030 following its announcement of \$102 million in funding that will allow for the modernization of Agropur’s dairy facilities in Beauceville – a move that will also create 60 jobs.

The investment is part of an overall \$1-billion package by Agropur to modernize the Beauceville plant, as well as its facilities in Bedford, Nova Scotia, which will produce 30 new jobs.

“By modernizing its Beauceville plant, Agropur will increase efficiency, diversify its product offerings, strengthen our food self-sufficiency, and consolidate its presence in the Quebec and Canadian

markets while continuing to play an important role in our economy,” Quebec’s news minister of Economy, Innovation and Energy, Bernard Drainville, told reporters on April 24.

The funding by Agropur – the largest province-run dairy processor in Quebec, representing 2,600 dairy farmers and nine processing plants – will allow the Beauceville plant’s operations to be automated to improve productivity and increase its capacity to process more milk and certain cheeses, Drainville said.

“Agropur is a pillar of our dairy industry,” he said. “Across Quebec, the cooperative supports thousands of workers and makes a tangible contribution to the vitality of our regions. As the son of a dairy farmer, this investment is particularly meaningful to me.”

Quebec Agriculture Minister Donald Martel joined Drainville in praising Quebec’s agri-food sector,

adding: “The dairy industry is one of the most important sectors of Quebec’s agri-food industry. It supports thousands of families across Quebec and contributes directly to the vitality of our regions. That is why our government continues to support local dairy producers and processors, who play an essential role in ensuring the prosperity of our regions and strengthening Quebec’s food self-sufficiency.”

This is the dairy cooperative’s largest investment in its Canadian facilities to date, supported by a \$100-million loan from Investissement Québec and \$2 million in financial assistance from the Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food.

The Beauceville plant, which already produces dairy proteins, will double its production capacity, while the Nova Scotia plant, which produces fluid milk, will expand its operations to include the production of proteins and butter.



Greenhouse gas emissions on Canadian farms remain steady

This means, as other sectors improve, farming's proportion of overall problem is growing

Christopher Bonasia

The Advocate

Local Journalism Initiative

Agriculture emissions have stayed steady for nearly two decades in Canada, making the industry's portion of emissions more prominent as other sectors cut back.

The most recent National Emissions Inventory, released in April, catalogues Canada's greenhouse gas emissions across economic sectors from 1990 to 2024. The inventory shows that while the country as a whole has started reducing its emissions, individual sectors have performed better or worse in comparison.

Electricity emissions halved

For example, emissions from electricity have dropped by more than half in this time frame, while oil and gas emissions are higher than in 2005, but lower than when they peaked in 2014.

Canada's agriculture emissions are notable for remaining roughly the same, having stayed within a range of two metric tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent since 2005. But while the sector's total amount of emissions remains stable, its portion of national emissions becomes greater.

Measured by comparison

"As other sectors are decarbonizing, what we're seeing is that agriculture is now increasingly one of the big target sectors contributing to climate change," said Geneviève Grossenbacher, director of policy at Farmers for Climate Solutions.

Grossenbacher raised concerns that farming could become the leading sector contributing to climate change if we get to a point where agriculture's emissions stay the same, but all other sectors make effective reductions.

"I think that would put even more of a target on farmers' backs," Grossenbacher said.

Crop emissions have gone up

Emissions trends vary within the agriculture sector, too. While livestock emissions have gone down, crop farming emissions have gone up, largely because of urea-based fertilizers that



PROXIMA STUDIO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Carbon dioxide emissions from Canada's agriculture sector have remained steady since 2005. But as other sectors have seen their emissions drop, this means the farming sector's proportion of overall emissions has grown.

release nitrous oxide – a powerful greenhouse gas that has a potent, longer-lasting impact than other greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide or methane.

Fertilizer use has increased 108 per cent since 2005, according to the inventory. Grossenbacher attributes that rise to several factors, including more intensive production of fertilizer-heavy crops like canola and corn in the Prairie provinces, and a shift to more annual crop production and less perennial-based livestock systems. There are also increasing fertilizer application rates needed to sustain higher yields.

In the future, this trend could become even more exaggerated if even more land becomes devoted to crops for bio-fuels and sustainable aviation fuel.

There are some signs indicating farmers could start cutting back their

fertilizer application. For one thing, rising prices for farm inputs – in part linked to geo-political turmoil in the Strait of Hormuz – seem to be tilting some producers to turn towards lower-demanding crops, like lentils.

Risks linked to new methods

And others have reported success in shifting to new management systems that can sustain profits while using fewer inputs. But there are obviously risk and uncertainty tied to taking on new farming practices.

"Key to that is making sure that we have programs where (farmers) can be paired with other farmers or other agrologists who can help make a plan that works for them on their farm," Grossenbacher said. "Because not all practices work on all farms," and not all skills fit well with all farmers.

Some programs available include the federal government's On-Farm Climate Action Fund, or Farmers for Climate Solutions' profit warranty to optimize nitrogen rates. The profit warranty is an opportunity for farmers who implement split nitrogen application, and guarantees profits by paying for losses linked to trying out the practice. The program also offers support for agronomist services, reimbursement for a soil test, and an honorarium.

"Farmers and farm managers should be proud of the work that they do," Grossenbacher said.

"That's not to say that there's good and bad farming. It's just to say that overall, the context is even more challenging; it's putting more pressure on them, and there's a lot of things that we can do to support them better."



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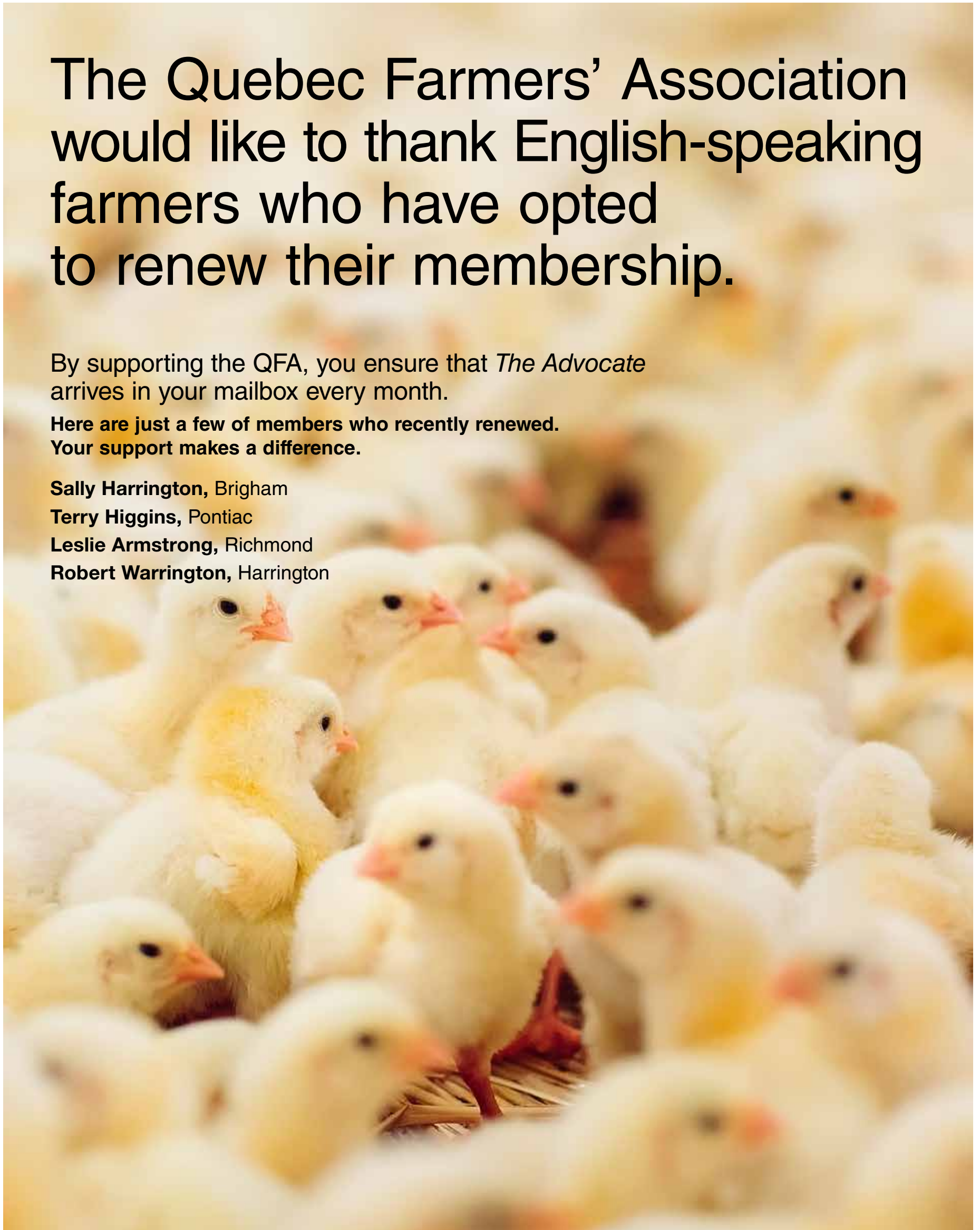
**Here are just a few of members who recently renewed.
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Terry Higgins, Pontiac

Leslie Armstrong, Richmond

Robert Warrington, Harrington





QFA videoconferences



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WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2026 7:30 P.M.

Brenda Hsueh, Black Sheep Farm

Black Sheep Farm in Ontario isn't trying to save the world.

But the practices of owner/operators Brenda Hsueh and Skyler Radojkovic could go a long way toward maximizing the positive soil carbon capture benefits of ruminants – all while producing food and fibre.

Black Sheep Farm keeps its flocks on pasture and sells its lamb meat, on-the-farm-made yarn and even tanned lambskins. Hsueh and Radojkovic want to see farming become the climate crisis saviour it should be.

In this videoconference, Brenda Hsueh will walk us through Black Sheep's agriculture philosophy and sales practices for a glimpse into a different kind of sheep production.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85348710338?pwd=ic5AVbXLktoty3fHW8C7opPhCkaJCD.1>

Meeting ID: 853 4871 0338

Passcode: 748242

If you have missed an online forum, recordings are now available at the QFA website: quebecfarmers.org

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

To be added to our email list so you never miss a videoconference, write to qfa_advocate@yahoo.ca



Collective model offers new path for Quebec farm transfers

Andrew McClelland

The Advocate

Local Journalism Initiative

For a growing number of Quebec farmers facing retirement without a family successor, the question is no longer simply who will buy the farm – but whether an entire group can take it over together.

That was the focus of a recent online meeting hosted by the Quebec Farmers' Association, where, a development adviser with the *Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité* (CQCM), explained how agricultural businesses can be transferred into cooperative ownership instead of being sold to a single buyer.

"Right now, the context for this kind of transfer is very favourable," Gagné said. "In the next three years, 10,000 Quebec businesses per year will be looking to change hands. That's a lot of businesses that are seeking succession or looking to sell."

Across Quebec, fewer and fewer farm families have a next generation ready to step in. For producers who want to see that the farm business they've built remains productive and locally rooted, Gagné says the cooperative model can offer another way forward.

An alternative option

"It's a process through which a business is taken over by a group of individuals or a social economy enterprise," he said, describing what CQCM calls a collective transfer. "The goal is to continue operating that business according to the principles of the social economy."

The term "social economy" refers to organizations driven by societal, community or environmental goals – that is to say, not driven solely by raking in profits. In practical terms, that can mean employees, customers, suppliers or community members forming a cooperative to purchase a farm together. In some cases, an existing cooperative can also acquire a business and operate it as part of a larger organization.

For many producers, the attraction goes beyond succession itself.

"A lot of them go with the worker's co-op model," said Gagné. "It has the benefit that you can take vacation and days off. That was not always easy



COURTESY OF JÉRÔME GAGNÉ

Jérôme Gagné of the *Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité* says cooperative ownership can give Quebec farmers another option when no family successor is ready to take over the farm.

with the family model."

Smaller farms have succeeded

Gagné said most successful farm transfers through the collective model have happened in market garden operations and smaller farms selling directly to consumers. Those businesses often lend themselves better to shared ownership than larger commodity farms with heavy infrastructure costs.

Still, he stressed that cooperative ownership is not simply a matter of splitting the farm between several people.

"The people in the group who want to buy the agricultural enterprise must know what they're doing," he said. "It's

not something you improvise."

That means buyers need agricultural experience, compatible values and a clear plan for how the farm will operate after the transition. In many successful examples, at least some of the future cooperative members were already working on the farm before the sale.

Financing still a hurdle

Still, just as in all areas of a farm business, one of the biggest obstacles remains financing.

Traditional lenders, like most major banks, are often more comfortable with family succession than a cooperative structure involving several members and shared ownership. In Quebec,

however, support is available through the *Fonds de développement du repreneuriat collectif*, a provincial fund designed to help businesses transfer into collective ownership.

"That can pay up to 67 per cent of the expense," Gagné said. "It's a grant, so you don't have to reimburse it."

That funding can help cover professional services such as legal advice, business valuations, feasibility studies and project management – costs that can quickly become overwhelming for younger farmers trying to purchase a business together.

To access that funding buyers must first demonstrate that both sides of the transaction are serious.

Process takes time

"You have to have a group that is interested in buying the business and a seller that is interested in selling it," Gagné explained. "Then, we evaluate the seriousness of both parties and the capacity of the buyers."

Even with support, collective transfers can take time. Some move from idea to sale within a year, while others take three to five years depending on financing, legal work and the complexity of the farm operation.

Too often, Gagné said, producers begin thinking about succession only in the final year before retirement, leaving little time to explore alternatives.

"Planning is important," he said. "Some people say five years in advance. It may seem long, but it gives everyone time to build something solid."

As farmland prices continue to rise and fewer young farmers can afford to purchase alone, Gagné believes cooperative ownership could play a larger role in preserving Quebec agriculture.

"Collective transfer is not the answer for every farm," he said. "But when the right people come together around the right project, it can keep a business alive, keep knowledge in the community, and make sure the farm stays in local hands."

To learn more about creating a collective ownership of a Quebec business, visit the Conseil québécois de la coopération et de la mutualité's website at <https://cqcm.coop>. Links to the Fonds de développement du repreneuriat collectif (FDRC) can be found by scrolling down on the right-hand column of that page.



SPONSORED CONTENT

Socially raised calves are more resilient, productive

Rodrigo Molano

Dairy production expert, Lactanet

Although raising young calves in pairs or in groups might initially seem like merely a housing option, compiling evidence reveals that early social housing is a means to fulfill the calf's developmental need for social interaction, ultimately leading to more resilient and productive cows.

The complex process of rearing a high-quality dairy replacement is based on giving her every opportunity to express her genetic potential. This means preventing factors that can hinder development, like disease or intra-uterine heat stress, while meeting key developmental needs. These range from proper colostrum feeding to support immunity and gut development, passing to adequate nutrition to foster optimal growth, to balanced nutrition through the transition period, all of which are essential for a strong start to first lactation.

Under more natural conditions, calves form early social bonds with their dam and with other newborn calves as they integrate into the herd. Until recently, most studies on social housing had limited their observations to the few first months of life, concluding that, compared with individually housed calves, calves raised under some type of social housing express less signs of stress, consume more feed and gain more weight, particularly during weaning.

However, a recent series of studies from the University of Florida have complemented this evidence, supporting that the benefits of early social contact persist over the entire rearing period and the first lactation.

Two is better than one

According to these studies, the growth advantage related to social housing is maintained through puberty and until first calving, particularly for heifers raised in pairs compared with those raised individually. This group of researchers also noted that socially raised heifers had improved adaptive behaviours when faced regrouping prior calving, which in this case involved their first exposure to



EHASDEMIR/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Studies have shown that calves exposed to social contact express fewer signs of stress, consume more feed and gain more weight, and that these attributes persist over the entire rearing period and into their first lactation.

freestalls, a feedbunk and to multiparous cows, since these heifers were raised together on pasture after weaning. After regrouping, the heifers previously raised in pairs stayed less time in the stall and spent more time exploring and eating compared with those raised individually, particularly when the barn was at or over capacity.

Finally, these investigators monitored these heifers for the first 100 days of the first lactation and reported that cows reared in pairs or groups during the preweaning period produced more milk than those reared individually (38.5 vs 36.6 kg of milk per day). These differences were more apparent for cows that calved during the cool season.

For some, providing social housing to calves is a way to make a better use of labour and other resources. For others, raising calves in pairs or groups may seem like nothing more than meeting the code of practice requirements for indoor calf housing. However, the evidence presented here shows that early social housing is much more than that, it is a powerful tool for developing the cognitive and behavioural abilities

that support lifelong adaptability and performance in dairy heifers.

To fully benefit from early social housing, dairy producers should partner with their personnel and advisers to plan and execute a successful transition. Some key considerations to keep in mind include the following:

Mastering the basic calf-care practices before transitioning to social housing. Evaluate health and growth indicators under the current program. If unsatisfactory, review and improve key areas, like the newborn management, colostrum feeding, plane of nutrition and weaning protocol.

Clearly identify any concerns you may have about social housing, like an increase in cross-sucking episodes, and incorporate appropriate prevention and mitigation strategies into the plan.

Look to farms that have successfully adopted social housing to gain insight into effective strategies and potential challenges.

When possible, begin gradually by pairing a few calves at a time and refining the approach until you establish a system that works for your farm.

Pairing or grouping strategy. To capture the above-mentioned benefits of early social housing it is recommended to pair group calves within the first three weeks of life, and ideally within the first week of life. Keep the group size under 10 calves and ensure they are homogeneous in age and size.

Provide a minimum of 35 square feet of bedded area and 600 feet cubed of air per calf.

Ensure abundant bedding, effective ventilation and adequate drainage to support good air quality and calf comfort.

Early social housing should no longer be seen just as an alternative management choice, but as a strategy to raise heifers that are better equipped to adapt, grow and perform throughout life. By investing in good calf-care fundamentals and implementing social housing thoughtfully, dairy producers can build a more resilient and efficient herd, a couple or few calves at a time. Leverage the people and resources around you to unlock the full potential of your rearing program.

Corn, soybean, wheat prices all expected to rise: USDA

Ramzy Yelda

Senior Market Analyst

Producteurs de grains du Québec

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's first global grain supply and demand forecasts for 2026-'27 are bullish: prices of the three major grains are expected to increase.

The USDA projects a corn yield of 183 bu/ac, compared with 186.5 bu/ac in 2025. With a seeded area of 95.3 million acres (Ma) versus 98.8 Ma last year, production is forecast at 16 billion bushels (BBU), a decrease of 1 BBU, or 6 per cent.

Feed use and exports fall by 100 million bushels

(MBU) and 150 Mbu, respectively.

Stocks decrease from 2,142 Mbu in 2026 to 1,957 Mbu in 2027. The average price is expected to reach \$4.40/bu compared with \$4.15/bu in 2025/26.

For soybeans, the USDA projects a yield of 53 bu/ac, unchanged from 2025. With a seeded area of 84.7 Ma compared with 81.2 Ma last year, production is forecast at 4,435 MBU, an increase of 173 Mbu, or 4 per cent.

Exports and crushing increase by 100 Mbu and 120 Mbu, respectively.

Inventories decrease from 340 Mbu in 2026 to 310 Mbu in 2027. The average price is expected to reach \$11.40/bu compared with \$10.40/bu in 2025-'26.

For wheat, the USDA forecasts a yield of 47.5 bu/ac compared with 53.3 bu/ac in 2025. With a seeded area of 43.8 Ma versus 45.3 Ma last year, production falls to 1,561 Mbu, a decrease of 424 Mbu, or 21 per cent.

Exports decrease by 135 million bushels (Mbu). Inventories fall from 935 Mbu in 2026 to 762 Mbu in 2027. The average price is expected to rise to \$6.50/bu compared with \$5/bu in 2025-'26 for all wheats combined.

Internationally, wheat production is projected to decline in all exporting countries, while South American soybean production is expected to increase.

PGQ welcomes Quebec's new Environment minister

The Producteurs de grains du Québec (PGQ) congratulated Pascale Déry on her appointment as minister of the Environment last month.

The PGQ hopes Déry's priority will be to fulfill the commitment outlined by new CAQ leader and premier Christine Fréchette, on fully and permanently reimbursing farmers for carbon pricing.

Other important topics, such as the proposed regulation respecting agri-environmental practices (RPAE), should also be discussed between the ministry and the grain sector.

Grain producers have also noted several agriculture-related commitments announced by Fréchette, including increasing financial assistance for the next generation of farmers, promoting Quebec food in public institutions, simplifying government programs and reducing red tape.

"The agriculture commitments that have been announced are sending encouraging signals," said PGQ president Sylvain Pion. "It will now be essential to move from intention to action. The last budget tabled by the government gave the new premier considerable room to manoeuvre, and we hope that part of the funds will be earmarked for agriculture."

Markets webinar

The PGQ's market information service hosted a free webinar May 14 that focused on the analysis of the 2026-2027 bids and asks published by the USDA.

The analysis of the local market, included a look at the supply and demand for corn in Quebec.

"Win the Grain Caravan in Your Schoolyard" contest

Congratulations to Alberte-Melançon School in Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix, south of St. Jean sur Richelieu, which will welcome the Grain Caravan in its schoolyard at the end of May.

Grade 3 students are the big winners of the "Win the Grain Caravan in Your Schoolyard" contest organized by the PGQ. They will be treated to an educational and fun visit to explore the wonderful world of Quebec grains. A great opportunity to learn while having fun.

Training for new directors and leaders of PGQ affiliated syndicates

A training day for new directors and leaders of the PGQ's affiliated syndicates was held April 16 at the Maison de l'UPA in Longueuil. This annual training session familiarized members who have recently joined the organization with the main issues and challenges in the sector.

This year's training day ended with a very informative tour of the Bunge-owned terminal at the Port of Montreal.



COURTESY PGQ

New directors and leaders of the Producteurs de grains du Québec's affiliated syndicates toured a grains terminal at the Old Port in Montreal last month as part of a training session.



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.



FCC News

Farm tax planning: the basics

Farm Credit Canada

Tax rules are complicated. They vary from one province to another and different accountants may recommend different strategies to minimize your tax liability. So while professional tax advice is vital, it's also important to understand basic tax principles.

Should you incorporate?

The pros and cons depend on your situation.

Corporate tax rates are significantly lower than personal tax rates, particularly up to the \$500,000 taxable income level that qualifies for the small business deduction. However, incorporation isn't always the best approach. It needs to make sense for you and your operation.

The benefits hinge on how much income is generated by the farm and what you need to withdraw personally. If you're taking out most of the farm's net income every year, incorporation may not lower your overall tax bill.

There are also additional costs that come with a corporation. It's considered a separate entity and must file a separate income tax return. It can also have a different fiscal year-end.

If you can leave a large amount of net income within the farm corporation, it can substantially reduce your overall tax bill, at least short-term. But eventually, you may want to get your money out of the corporation, and when you do, you'll have to pay additional personal taxes. For that reason, the lower corporate tax rate might best be viewed as a tax deferral.

If your farm operates as a sole proprietorship, accountants will often recommend that it becomes an interim partnership, before being switched to a corporation. Rather than selling assets to the corporation and potentially triggering personal income, you can sell your partnership interest to the corporation, creating a capital gain that's eligible for the Capital Gains Exemption. This sale will, in turn, create a shareholder's loan that the corporation can then pay you without tax implications, provided you don't exceed the capital gains exemption limit.

There are several methods to remove retained income from a corporation, including wages, land rental and dividends.

Wages are an expense for the corporation and require you to pay Canada Pension Plan (CPP) contributions. If the farming corporation is renting land that

you own personally, the corporation can pay you land rent. In that case, you make no CPP contributions. The corporation can also pay dividends to shareholders. In this case, the corporation and the individual each pay a portion of the tax.

Your accountant will advise which approaches are best for your situation. One of the goals is to maximize the after-tax personal money available.

Capital gains count

Farmland values have steadily increased and, in many cases, so has quota. The increase from when you acquired the asset to when you sell it is a capital gain. And half of a capital gain becomes taxable income, so there can be a significant tax implication.

Farm assets like land and quota, shares in a farm corporation and interest in a qualified family farm partnership can roll over to direct family members on a tax-deferred basis. In other words, these can pass to your children or grandchildren without triggering capital gains tax, but doesn't apply to nieces and nephews. The roll-over provision is a key component in many transition plans.

Note that criteria exist for the roll-over provision regarding shares in a farm corporation. You must use at least 90 per cent of the assets in the farm corporation in the farm business. If there are non-farm investments (including cash) above the allowable amount, the farm corporation would have to make changes to be eligible for the rollover.

A Lifetime Capital Gains Exemption of \$1 million is available to farmers, and it's an important tax planning tool that may also have transition planning implications.

In many cases, if spouses are joint owners of assets, they can both qualify for the exemption. Corporations don't, as it only applies to individuals.

There are benefits to retaining personal ownership of farmland and keeping it out of the corporation. If a capital gain is realized on the sale of farmland, the Lifetime Capital Gains Exemption can be used to offset the taxable capital gain.

For purchases of additional land personally, individuals can collect on their shareholder loan owed to them by the company to make the payments. It's also advantageous for the corporation to purchase additional land from retained earnings. Those earnings will have accumulated at a faster rate within the



LARYSAP/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

corporation due to the lower tax rate.

Consider land transfer taxes

Some provinces have lower land transfer taxes and do not end up as a major consideration. In other provinces, like Ontario, the land transfer tax is significant. Exemptions apply to allow families to continue farming the land without paying the tax. It's essential to know the rules and deadlines involved to avoid unnecessary expenses.

Cash vs. accrual considerations

Farmers can use the cash basis of accounting for income tax purposes. For instance, fertilizer purchased before your fiscal year-end can be used to reduce your farm income, even though it will be used to help grow next year's crop.

However, financial accounting should be done on an accrual basis matching the appropriate income with the appropriate expenses to provide an accurate financial picture of your farm for a specific time.

The cash-based accounting system allows for tax measures, such as the optional inventory adjustment, whereby a producer can include income in the current year up to the total value of their inventory.

As another option, you can claim less than the maximum Capital Cost Allowance (CCA) for machinery depreciation.

The cash basis of accounting is typically more useful for farms operating as a sole proprietorship or partnership where farm income becomes personal income. Balancing out farm income

from one year to the next can be important for staying in a lower tax bracket.

With corporations, the tax brackets are much larger, making income balancing less important in most cases. Though many corporate farms likely still file taxes on a cash basis.

A well-developed farm accounting software program such as AgExpert is invaluable for both accurate financial accounting on an accrual basis as well as the calculation of income tax using either cash or accrual.

Action plan

Your goals and objectives, transition plan (or exit plan) and your financial situation all factor into tax planning. Remember, tax law can be subject to interpretation, so work with an accountant to advise you on how decisions made when preparing income tax statements align with tax laws.

While tax avoidance is illegal, structuring your affairs to minimize tax liability is just good business.

Here's what you can do to make working with your accountant more productive:

- Keep good records.
- Explore an accounting software program if you don't already use one.
- Watch for changes in tax laws (often announced as part of federal and provincial budgets).
- Hold regular meeting with your accountant, not just one annual tax meeting.
- Tax plan for the short term and long term.



IHORM/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

One way to deal with spiking fertilizer prices is aiming to improve nitrogen-use efficiency on your farm, which could include splitting up nitrogen applications, using nitrogen stabilizers, and biological and bio-stimulant-type products.

Get the most out of your nitrogen — and save

Allen Wilder

William H. Miner

Agricultural Research Institute

May is the month when the majority of corn gets planted across North America. It is also one of the months when the most fertilizer is applied. It's a terrible time for fertilizer prices to spike, and yet, here we are.

The first nitrogen we typically apply each year at Miner Institute is urea for grass fields. While we still get a grass crop without the green-up fertilizer, the crop really responds positively to it. Rather than skipping the application, consider applying a reduced rate. This will improve nitrogen utilization somewhat without causing yields or protein content to fall off a cliff.

Consider potassium

Potassium prices aren't up nearly as much as nitrogen prices, so consider spending more of your fertilizer budget on potassium for alfalfa and mixed stands and less on nitrogen for grass.

While you may wish you could just take a year off from buying fertilizer, we all know that crop yield requires nitrogen, and the cows still need to eat. While we can't take a year off, we can try to make cropping decisions that will allow us to purchase less, while using nitrogen as efficiently as possible.

Corn likes manure

For corn, a spring manure application is recommended where possible prior to planting. Manure is an excellent source of nitrogen and other nutrients, but it needs to be incorporated into the soil as soon as possible to get the full nitrogen benefit.

While injection equipment is ideal, it isn't required. I have known farms that run a tillage tractor right behind the manure spreader with excellent crop response.

A spring manure application will allow you to cut your starter fertilizer rate. While you may not use much anyway, small reductions can add up

significantly across large areas. Your biggest savings, however, will come from the nitrogen your corn can use later in the season, when the corn enters the rapid growth phase. The caveat is that this will only work if you properly adjust your side-dress rates. The best way to do this is to take a pre-side-dress nitrate test (PSNT). Many guidelines suggest that a PSNT value of 21 parts per million indicates that you can get by without applying any additional nitrogen fertilizer to the corn crop.

Other tricks

Another simple trick to cut down on your nitrogen fertilizer bill is to rotate grass fields into corn.

Cornell research has shown that first-year corn requires little or no nitrogen fertilizer. If that will put you short on feed, you can always take first cut and then plant a short-season corn after applying manure. The difficulty is getting it done in a timely fashion.

Other things that can help improve nitrogen-use efficiency on your farm

might include splitting up nitrogen applications, using nitrogen stabilizers, and biological and bio-stimulant-type products. While these might not translate into huge savings, they all can work under certain conditions. For broadcast urea, try urease inhibitors, which, when applied to urea-based fertilizers, slow down the enzyme-driven breakdown of urea into ammonia. This works well when no rain or tillage is expected.

However, nitrification inhibitors that may alter the biological community of the soil is not recommended. More research is needed on these, and many of the biological products before we start using them routinely here at Miner Institute.

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



Kiwi Steak Marinade



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

This tenderizing kiwi-based marinade will make your next steak something special.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 kiwi, peeled and chopped
- 2 bay leaves, roughly crumbled
- 1 green onion, chopped
- Small piece of ginger, chopped fine
- 2 tablespoons red wine (optional)

PREPARATION

This amount works for about 1.5 pounds of steak.

Mix ingredients together and press onto steak. Marinate at least a few hours, or up to three days.

Remove from fridge an hour before cooking.

Remove all marinade from steaks.

Sprinkle with salt and pepper.

Heat a cast-iron pan to med-high. Put a small dab of butter in pan. Sear steak about 3 minutes per side for rare.

Remove from pan and put on wooden cutting board with ridged edge to capture any juices. Tent with foil. Let sit 3 minutes.

It can be served as a whole steak, or cut thinly across the grain and served on a warm platter.



Steak: It's not just *what* but *how* you cook it

Cynthia Gunn
QFA's Food Writer

Forgive me for my lack of knowledge about steak.

But if I'm anything to go on, the general public likely holds just as little knowledge when it comes to beef cuts and their treatment. The thinness of steaks in supermarkets that people are willing to put up with supports this theory.

If you have ever had a steak in a good restaurant, one that knows and understands its beef, then you know that there must be some alchemy between the beef and its handler. At home, it's easy to forget that. While we may not be restaurant professionals, there are a few things we can keep in mind to prepare steak properly.

Recently, an experience at the meat counter toppled me out of my perch of ignorance about steak cuts, and in the interests of improving your next steak, I am exposing my woe here. Let me start with the fact that tenderloin of any animal is, of course, going to be tender, so let's move onto a common word that we see: sirloin.

I had vague notions that sirloin is not quite as good as rib-eye, but couldn't really tell you more than that. I would generally cruise the steaks and judge by price: more expensive always means better, right? I should know better.

I bought some tip sirloin that was more expensive than the top sirloin next to it, which I also bought. How could I resist when they had both just been marked down by 30 per cent?

For years I've been queen at picking up the just-marked-down expensive steak cuts. Sometimes, I'll have several of these stashed in the freezer. We sat down to the tip, and chewed. And chewed. The expense, I came to realize, was because it was local and organic, not because it was tender. I had another sirloin tip to cook. I needed to learn.

My first foray into cuts and cooking methods was brief, telling me simply that the tip sirloin sits closer to the tenderloin and is more tender, whereas the sirloin tip comes from what's called the round primal, and is found on the front end of the rear leg. The latter is a little tough and should be marinated. Aha, OK lesson Number 1 is don't be fooled by the word "sirloin."

What was I going to marinate with?

Another quick information foray led me to an unusual solution that worked perfectly: kiwi.

Apparently, kiwi contains actinidin, a natural enzyme that breaks down meat proteins and connective tissues, resulting in superior tenderness.

Bonus, I had a few wrinkled kiwis, dried out ginger and aging green onions that all needed to be used. I put half the steak to marinate for a few hours only, which worked all right, and tested leaving the other half marinating for three days. This worked brilliantly. It was very tender.

I should mention that, thankfully, quite some time ago, a small specialty meat shop set me right about cooking steak when I offered up my lack of a barbecue or grill.

"Steak should almost always be seared in a cast-iron pan," she assured me. I've cooked it that way (mostly) successfully ever since.

Since anatomy Lesson 1 – tip and top sirloin are cousins only – I've been curious to learn more. There are many sources that can teach you about beef cuts and appropriate cooking methods. I found the website of Umbria restaurant in Boston informative, clear and mouth-watering. I would book a reservation if it was closer and I had a few hundred dollars to spare.

Umbria restaurant points out something we have all experienced: "Pick the wrong cooking method and a great piece of beef turns into an expensive chew toy."

The approach for sirloin tip boils down to three rules: marinate, cook hot and fast, and slice thin. They also recommend steak of any kind be one to 1.25 inches thick. Unless you can speak to the butcher and have steak cut for you, this is well nigh impossible. And with the loss of true butcher shops, actually seeing, let alone talking to, a butcher is one of life's small challenges worth taking.

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

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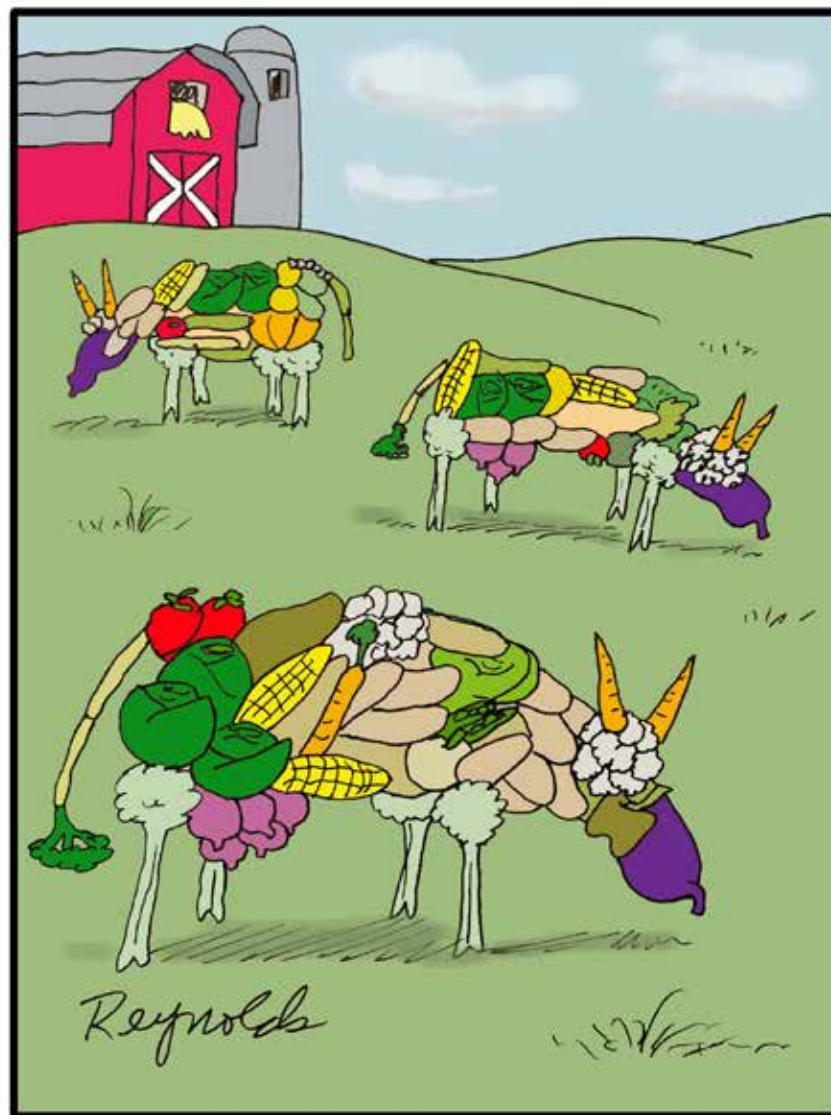
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Contact us by phone: 514-246-2981

