Quebec Farmers'
Advocate

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WHAT'S INSIDE

"The changing global landscape has put a great deal of stress on the men and women who put food on our tables."

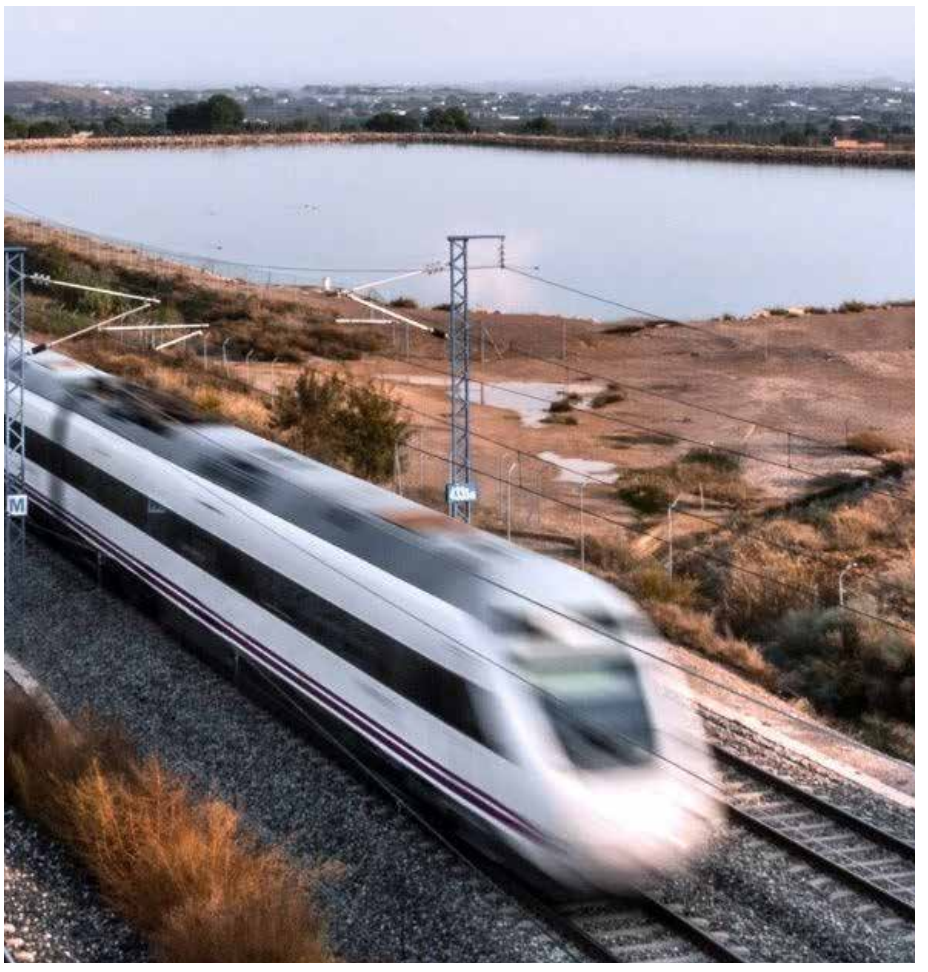
— Robb Nelson, chief executive officer of Farm Lending Canada, an alternative lender that is expanding its offerings to farm succession and transition lending with help from Farm Credit Canada

QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

Thursday, June 25
at 7:30 p.m.

Apple Trees for Any Farm: Fruit Trees in Quebec

See page 16 for details.



ALTOTRAIN.CA

Opposition to the proposed Alto high-speed rail project from Quebec City to Toronto is mounting, with farmers in both Quebec and Ontario joining forces to voice their objections.

Opposition to Alto rail plan ramping up in Quebec, Ontario

Brenda O'Farrell
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

Farmers on both sides of the Quebec-Ontario border are stepping up pressure on the federal government, urging it to press the pause bottom on plans for a high-speed rail project between Quebec City and Toronto, claiming it would have permanent and devastating impacts on some of Canada's best farmland.

"Farmers are not opposed to progress, but progress cannot come at the expense of the people and farmland that feeds our communities and this country," said Drew Spoelstra, president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture at a joint press conference held June 8 with representatives of the Union des producteurs agricoles and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture.

"The questions farmers are asking are reasonable, and they deserve clear answers," Spoelstra added.

The farmers' groups are calling for a comprehensive economic, environmental and agricultural assessment of the project that would include consultations with landowners who would be directly affected.

Improving rail transport is a desirable goal, but it must not be done at the expense of agricultural land or without a rigorous and transparent analysis of the different possible options, UPA president Martin Caron said at the press conference.

On June 10, the UPA was among a variety of groups that took their concerns with the rail project to Parliament Hill.

See HIGH-SPEED RAIL, Page 12.

Quebec presses ahead with wind expansion

Government ignoring cumulative impacts, critics say, as it fast-track projects

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

As Quebec's environment minister has pledged to slash the time required to approve major wind energy projects, critics – including the province's own environmental review body – say the government is deliberately avoiding a broader reckoning with the cumulative damage dozens of new wind farms could inflict on agricultural land and rural communities.

At a renewable energy summit organized by the Canadian Renewable Energy Association (CanREA) in Montreal last month, Quebec Environment Minister Pascale Déry told industry representatives that her government is working to cut environmental authorization timelines in half – from 18 months to 9 months – for large-scale projects, including wind turbines. Streamlining the regulatory process "is not an easy task," she acknowledged, but "we're making a lot of efforts."

"Reducing timelines doesn't mean we can't do it with environmental rigour," Déry said.

The minister's comments came just weeks after the Union des producteurs agricoles led a coalition demanding Hydro-Québec suspend its wind energy call for tenders entirely. The UPA joined forces with CUPE-Quebec, the citizens' group Regroupement vigilance énergie Québec (RVÉQ) and the advocacy organization *Vent d'élus* to denounce what they called the "imminent incursion of several hundred wind turbines into the heart of productive agricultural zones" – with no prior public debate about the consequences.

See WIND, Page 4.

Just the facts

10%

This is the portion of greenhouse gas emissions in Canada in 2024 stemming from the agricultural sector, ranking it as the fifth largest emitter by sector among the seven sectors that produce emissions — behind the oil and gas sector, which accounts for 30 per cent of emissions; the transportation industry, which contributes 22 per cent; buildings, which account for 12 per cent; and heavy industry, which is responsible for 11 per cent. Only the electricity sector, which is responsible for 7.2 per cent of emissions; and what the federal government describes as "waste and other," which emit 6.9 per cent of CO_2 equivalent; account for less than the farming sector.

Source: Greenhouse gas sources and sinks in Canada report released in April 2026

432

The number of children who lost their lives due to farming-related incidents in the three decades from 1990 to 2020, according the Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting data. Children between the ages of 1 and 4 had the highest fatality rate.

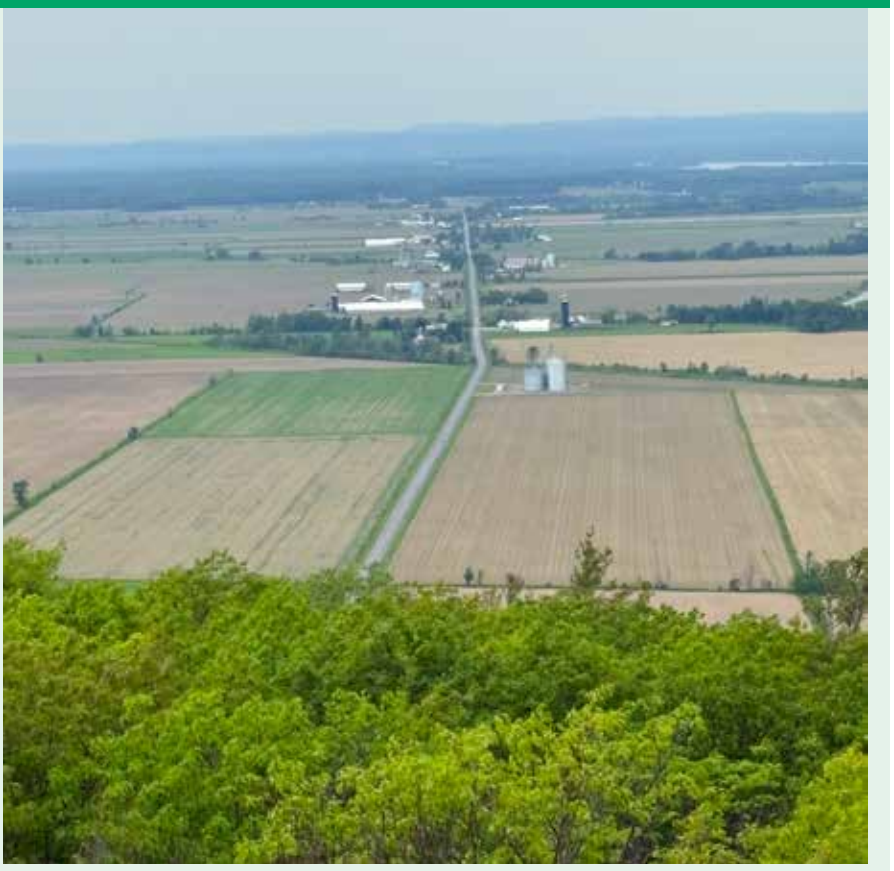
Source: Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

$137 million

That is the value of Quebec's dairy exports to all foreign markets in 2025. The figure represents an 8-per-cent increase compared with 2024. Last year, 29 per cent of Quebec's dairy exports went to the U.S. This biggest single market saw a 33-per-cent hike.

Source: Quebec Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

FIELDS IN FOCUS



THE ADVOCATE

This is the view of the farms in the Rigaud area, just east of the Ontario border, from the top of Mont Rigaud, the highest peak in the region. There is not much green there. But that is about to change.

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

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News

CPTAQ orders brasserie operation to scale back

Frederic Serre
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

The Quebec government's "illogical" rules aimed at protecting farmland are killing his popular Laurentians agri-tourist destination, says Alexandre Ladouceur, a Mirabel resident who has been at the centre of a protracted battle with the province's farmland protection agency, which has ruled this spring that he has to scale back his microbrewery operation to only 20 seats.

"I don't sleep at night," Ladouceur said. "Will we be able to pay our bills? I don't know what we're going to do."

In 2019, Ladouceur opened Sucrerie Bonaventure, located on agriculturally-zoned land in Mirabel. Tourists flocked to his establishment in droves to get a taste of the traditional sugaring-off experience. At the same time, Ladouceur opened his microbrewery, L'Entêté, with a dining room that was averaging up to 200 guests per day.

Ladouceur said he based his "profitable" approach on selling 90 per cent of the beer he produces using the barley he grows, as well as his other crops through his food menu – all of this to respect the government's rules to protect farmlands.

"We grow potatoes, carrots and lettuce. We have our own chickens, eggs and turkeys. We produce just about everything," he said.

In May, however, Ladouceur said he got a visit from inspectors with the Commission de la protection du territoire agricole (CPTAQ), informing him that he had to reduce the seating capacity of his brewery to a maximum of 20. From Feb. 15 to May 15, however, Ladouceur said he was told the capacity could be expanded for the sugaring-off season.

This is the latest development in a long battle between Ladouceur and the CPTAQ that traces back to the 1980s.

The CPTAQ had accused the previous owners of the establishment of several violations, including exceeding the permitted number of seats, as well as the presence of playground equipment and a golf course on its land, which is designated for agricultural use.

Ladouceur, however, argues that several developments, including the golf course in 1993, were carried out without authorization by the previous owners, long before he purchased the land in 2015.

"The 20-seat limit is completely illogical, it's what hurts the most," he said, resulting in the layoff of 170 employees, forcing him to cut off a large section of his dining room.

One of the laid off employees launched a petition, denouncing the Quebec government's actions, gathering 6,000 signatures in only a few days.

"As an employee, I sincerely believe it is possible to protect farmland while allowing Quebec agricultural businesses that process their products on-site to operate in a consistent, viable and equitable manner year-round," she wrote.

Ladouceur insists that his business model falls under the norms of the rules, as he serves his customers food grown on the land and makes beer from the barley he grows. He says that the law must be more flexible to allow for this type of agri-tourism.

"It's becoming increasingly difficult for farms to turn a profit. If we don't find ways to generate income, in 50 years there won't be any farmers left," he said.

In early March, Quebec Agriculture Minister Donald Martel introduced draft regulation aimed at relaxing agri-tourism rules. The maximum capacity would increase from 20 to 60.

"That would be a start, but it would take more than that for many farmers, including me," said Ladouceur.

COURTESY OF SUCRERIE BONAVENTURE

Alexandre Ladouceur, the owner of the Sucrerie Bonaventure and the L'Entêté microbrewery in Mirabel, was a guest on the Ian et Frank podcast in early June to discuss the recent ruling that has forced him to scale back his operations, which he describes as agri-tourism.

History the of dispute

- In the 1980s, the land was owned by a sod farm, Gazons Éthier, which argued that soil depletion on the land made its business unsustainable and proposed the development of an 18-hole golf course that would take up 35 hectares. Despite the support of the City of Mirabel, the CPTAQ was not convinced that the land's soil was depleted and refused the application. The Quebec Court of Appeal upheld that decision.
- Regardless, by 1993, a golf course and parking lot were operating on the land. The Club de golf Bonaventure greeted visitors with a reception area, even turning an agricultural building constructed in 1990 into a concession stand and golf equipment shop.
- In 1994, the Club de golf Bonaventure made a second application to the CPTAQ, stating it would "regularize" its golf course by experimenting with different types of grass and lawn production.
- The CPTAQ refused to grant it permission, arguing that the project would use 40 hectares of class 3 agricultural land and could be established on other non-agricultural land within the municipality of Mirabel. The Court of Appeal upheld the CPTAQ's refusal.
- Ownership of the land changed a few times during the 2000s, with the Club de golf Bonaventure finally closing for business after repeated requests from the CPTAQ.
- In 2015, current owner Alexandre Ladouceur opened La Sucrerie Bonaventure, one of the many large cabanes à sucres north of Montreal offering horse rides and pea-soup-and-pork brunches around the sugaring season.
- During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ladouceur made the decision to reopen golf facilities on the site.
- In 2020, Ladouceur applied to the CPTAQ for authorization to produce beer made from his own barley for his company, "Microbrasserie L'Entêté," which served meals and offered guided mini-farm tours. The plan also called for a parking lot that would accommodate 400 cars.
- The CPTAQ rejected the proposal, citing the protection of highly arable farmland.
- In 2024, La Sucrerie Bonaventure offered seating up to 1,000 and its sister company Microbrasserie L'Entêté could accommodate 300. Ladouceur promoted *Rodéo L'Entêté*, a two-day gathering featuring dance classes, live music and two evening rodeos. Advertising for the event invited attendees to "discover local agriculture by exploring our agricultural zone."
- The rodeo drew an estimated 18,000 people. The City of Mirabel itself, citing excessive traffic problems caused by the event, made a complaint to the CPTAQ, citing "excessiveness of activities in this agricultural area."
- In response, the CPTAQ in September 2024 informed Ladouceur that investigations into land-usage offences are being conducted.
- In March 2025, the commission sent La Sucrerie Bonaventure a cease-and-desist order. In part, it ordered Ladouceur to cease all activities "for the purposes of catering, meal service, alcohol and microbrewery service, golf, smoking, sales of goods, articles and miscellaneous products, beer production, maple water processing, parking, storage of goods, various objects and materials not intended for agricultural purposes as well as for the purposes of storage and sale of goods, objects and materials not produced on that lot."
- In May 2026 the CPTAQ ordered Ladouceur to reduce the seating capacity of his brewery to a maximum of 20.

News

NARAI CHAL/ISTOCK.COM

Quebec's ministry of environment says it can cut environmental authorization timelines from 18 months to 9 months for large-scale wind turbine projects. But the UPA and community groups are concerned that Quebec's push to increase wind energy will encroach upon agricultural land.

WIND: Tender calls for 250 to 500 turbines that could end up on productive farmland

From Page 1

The UPA's concern is concrete. The 2026 call for tenders, which targets 1,500 to 3,000 megawatts of new installed capacity, focuses on zones in the south of the province – from Châteauguay to Lotbinière through Joliette – regions that contain some of Quebec's best farmland. The 250 to 500 turbines the call could ultimately produce would sit almost entirely in productive agricultural zones that represent just 2 per cent of Quebec's total land mass.

"The pressure on agricultural land is significant and constant," said UPA president Martin Caron. "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."

On April 9, the day before Hydro-Québec formally launched its call for tenders, the UPA announced it had reached an agreement in principle with the Crown corporation. The deal includes updates to the reference framework governing wind farm siting on agricultural and forest land, an adjustment to the bid evaluation grid to discourage turbine placement on the highest-quality soils, and a financial contribution from Hydro-Québec to the UPA's fund for agricultural succession.

Fast-tracking projects

The pressure to build is real. Hydro-Québec wants to reach 10,000 megawatts of installed wind capacity by 2035 – nearly triple the current 4,000 MW – as part of its plan to decarbonize Quebec's economy and meet projected electricity demand. To get there, the Crown corporation estimates it needs to bring between 1,000 and 1,500 MW of new wind capacity online every year for the next decade.

"It's clearly ambitious and it's going to require everyone's effort to get there. It's clearly a real challenge," said Jan Ducouret, Hydro-Québec's senior director of development and partnerships, speaking at the CanREA summit.

Since announcing its wind strategy, Hydro-Québec has signed five partnership agreements totalling a potential 12,500 MW with regional county municipalities (MRCs) and First Nations in Gaspésie, Bas St. Laurent and Lac St. Jean. The April call for tenders identifies 12 sectors capable of hosting new wind production for projects coming online between 2031 and 2035.

Industry representatives welcomed the government's commitment to faster approvals. Jean Habel, CanREA's director for Quebec and Atlantic Canada, said involving the Bureau d'audiences publiques sur l'environnement (BAPE) earlier in the process would improve interaction with stakeholders.

"The idea of optimizing environmental timelines is to build the megawatts as quickly as possible, while respecting the full environmental process," Habel said.

Getting communities on board

On the ground, wind energy projects are already stirring divisions in rural communities – splitting landowners who welcome rental income from turbines on their properties from neighbours who bear the noise, visual disruption and road damage without compensation.

Yanick Baillargeon, prefect of the MRC du Domaine-du-Roy in Saguenay–Lac-Saint-Jean, acknowledged at the CanREA summit that securing community support for large projects has become harder than it once was. His MRC is part of a partnership with the Pekuakamiulnuatsh First Nation, the Atikamekw of Wemotaci and Hydro-Québec to develop the Chamouchouane wind zone, which could eventually host up to 3,000 MW of capacity – potentially one of the largest wind energy developments in North America.

"Is it because of social media? Or, is it since the pandemic? I don't know," Baillargeon said. "But it's clear that in the future, building large-scale projects will be much more difficult. So involving communities at the base will help secure that social licence."

Hydro-Québec's call for tenders requires projects to be backed by the relevant municipalities – a condition intended to ensure local buy-in. But critics say that requirement is no substitute for a province-wide assessment of what tripling Quebec's wind capacity will actually mean for the communities, farmland and ecosystems in its path.

News

New ag training facility opens in Alma

Frederic Serre
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

COURTESY COLLÈGE D'ALMA

This $1.2-million agricultural training facility at the Collège d'Alma will be part of the CEGEP's agricultural business management and technology program.

While Quebec's Saguenay-Lac St. Jean region and the town of Alma will reap the rewards of a brand new $1.2-million agricultural training facility inaugurated on June 9 at the Collège d'Alma, it is tomorrow's farmers and food safety experts who will benefit the most, says the college's executive director.

"Our students now have the tools they need to move from theory to practice, enriching their learning through meaningful experience," said Marie-Ève Gravel, during a ceremony unveiling the new building at the French-language CEGEP. "In this way, we are helping to train a new generation of leaders who are committed and deeply rooted in their community."

The new building, which replaces outdated facilities, spans 2,400 square feet and features a laboratory, two modular classrooms and a faculty office. Of the total funding designated for this project, $567,000 came from province's ministry of higher education.

Gravel said the new site reinforces the college's role as an innovative educational hub for its agricultural business management and technology program. She said the college, which has about about 1,500 students, will launch a project to use farm produce to distribute food to students – an initiative financially supported by Nutrinor, a local co-op representing 995 farmers and 1,000 employees working in four business sectors.

"We are proud to be able to offer our students modern, flexible facilities that perfectly meet their needs and aspirations," Gravel said.

Local MNA and minister delegate for regional economic development Eric Girard said he was "particularly excited about the project to utilize the food produced by the college's teaching farm. This is a very important partnership that the college has developed with Nutrinor."

Thanks to a $4,300 grant from Nutrinor, the college is now equipped with various pieces of equipment to prepare produce from the college's educational farm and food forest on-site, as well as products provided by various organizations for redistribution to members of the student community. The harvests will be shared at the Collège d'Alma Marketplace, a community fridge system available to the student body, thereby promoting values of solidarity and sustainable development.

"The partnership with Nutrinor is fundamental to the success of this project and perfectly illustrates the power of collaboration between the education sector and industry," said Nutrinor spokesperson Chantale Bélanger. "We sincerely believe that a more sustainable future is built through concrete initiatives like this one, which bring agriculture closer to people and their communities."

Quebec cranberry growers open research centre

Frederic Serre
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

The Cranberry Interpretation Centre has opened in Notre Dame de Lourdes, a tiny community two hours from Quebec City.

And although the research facility is headquartered in a small town with fewer than 800 residents northeast of Joliette, the work it will carry out will have a national and international impact. That impact is set to increase with its new molecular biology laboratory.

While the CRIC expects an influx of visitors this summer, there is one particular visitor that won't be welcome: pests, and more particularly, leafhoppers, small insects, colloquially known as hoppers, best known as plant feeders that suck plant sap from grass, shrubs and trees.

Leafhoppers have a particular liking for cranberries, which is why the CRIC's new lab is already working at responding quickly to the pest's potential ravages as the summer approaches.

According to Vincent Godin, president of the Quebec Cranberry Growers Association, leafhoppers attack cranberry crops and can transmit phytoplasmas, bacteria responsible for false flower disease, which reduces cranberry growth.

Some regions further south of Quebec are already dealing with leafhoppers, and the insect is gaining ground, Godin says.

"We know that pests are currently migrating northward. We want to stay ahead of this issue; we want to be ready to respond when it arrives. In fact, it was first detected in a field in Quebec in 2024," he said.

Funded exclusively by producers, the research facility aims to provide them with scientific support.

More than a dozen projects will be carried out this summer. Researchers will notably attempt to install artificial bumblebee nesting boxes and develop an organic fertilizer made from the frass of black soldier fly larvae.

The CRIC is also already collaborating with several Quebec universities and research centres in the main cranberry-producing regions of the United States.

Quebec is the second-largest cranberry producing region in the world after Wisconsin. The province is also a global leader in organic cranberry production. About 65 per cent of all cranberries grown in Canada are produced in Quebec, with exports made to about 40 countries. The industry supports more than 2,200 full-time jobs in the province.

QFA Editorial

NAME/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

As most farmers are also woodlot owners, they are involved and affected by the challenges facing the forestry sector.

Challenges facing woodlot owners growing

John McCart
QFA President

I attended the Fédération des producteurs forestiers du Québec's annual general meeting in Mont Laurier earlier this month. The members of the federation, along with the 13 regional UPA syndicates, represent more than 160,000 private woodlot owners across Quebec who own at least four hectares of forested land. This accounts for more than 17 per cent of the available forest in this province.

I have been a delegate for the region of Laurentides and Outaouais for almost three years and this was my first experience at an annual meeting, and it was our turn to host. We were joined by more than 100 delegates from across Quebec. The two-day event included special tours for spouses as well as a gala banquet that honoured one of the delegates that served for more than 36 years. The evening closed with entertainment from a group of dancers.

The first day started with conferences that included a presentation from La Turquoise, a company that offers insurance for woodlot owners for protection from fire, wind, ice and vandalism. This is of some interest as there are more and more losses incurred by woodlot owners due to dramatic climatic events.

New tech easy to use

The second conference was also very interesting. Representatives of a group called FORAIR, which has developed a free web application to help forest owners manage their woodlots, talked about their work with land owners and the forestry federation. Through the use of drones and aerial photographs the app can produce a diagnostic of the state of the woodlot, including species and stage of growth. This information can be used by a forestry engineer to determine the best course of action for the landowner to determine the potential of the forest.

The app is free and easy to use. I was able to locate my woodland quickly. And FORAIR is plugged into all the MRCs around Quebec.

The other conferences included the volume of wood delivered to the mills as well as the trends to follow.

Tariffs having an impact

As everyone knows by now, the tariffs of the last 15 months have been devastating to both mill owners and forestry producers, with many mills closing and landowners not knowing if there will be any profit.

Not unlike farming, the challenges facing woodlot owners seem to get more daunting every year. Some resolutions were passed with the aim to make the industry more prosperous.

Most farmers, if not all, are also woodlot owners, and are able to claim a rebate from MAPAQ on their municipal taxes. However, this does apply to those who own land in the forestry zone only. This is one of the major problems with mills that buy from public forests.

At a recent press conference in Rivière de Loup, the forestry federation demanded that both private and public lands be treated the same so that unfair competitive practices be eliminated. All the private woodlot owners actually contribute back to the economy through both land and income taxes.

Carbon tax implications

There is also the issue of the carbon tax that forestry producers pay on the logging and transport of wood products. An agreement similar to that of grain producers must be granted.

Another resolution called on the governments to mandate that more local wood products be used in construction. With the growing push to increase housing starts to address the housing crisis, it is a good opportunity to take advantage of.

The private woodlot owners and the industry as a whole is an important economic sector in this province, therefore, measures must be taken to protect it from geo-politics, climate change, invasive pests and mismanagement.

News

Beef producers seek to be excluded from Mercosur trade deal

Frederic Serre
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

With domestic demand for beef waning in Canada, and with Prime Minister Mark Carney intensifying his government's quest to conclude a trade agreement with Mercosur countries in Central and South America by the end of the year, Canadian beef producers are calling for their products to be excluded from any agreement.

"For trade to work, it must be reciprocal and fair, but with Mercosur, it is neither," warned Jean-François Gaudette of the *Producteurs de bovins du Québec*, referring to the countries which include Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Speaking to reporters on Parliament Hill in Ottawa last month, Gaudette said beef producers fear they will be used as a bargaining chip in trade negotiations between Canada and the Mercosur countries. Gaudette was among a group of beef ranchers from Western Canada and Ontario who travelled to Ottawa to denounce the government's rush to conclude a trade agreement by the end of 2026 and its lack of transparency. The negotiations, which began eight years ago and were put on hold during the pandemic years, have intensified following Carney's election.

The prime minister has set a goal of doubling exports outside the United States – from $300 billion to $600 billion – over the next decade, in response to the uncertainty caused by U.S. tariffs over the past year.

Carney is courting major markets, like China and India, two countries the prime minister has visited in recent months, stressing that he also considers Mercosur to be an important partner. Mercosur countries represent a market of more than 270 million people with a gross domestic product of $4 trillion.

Trade between Canada and the Mercosur countries reached $15.8 billion in 2024 and was driven primarily by imports into Canada. Imports totlaled $12.8 billion, compared with $3.1 billion in Canadian exports.

However, beef producers have no illusions about their access to this market.

"We offer a high-end product, so it would be difficult for us to compete there, especially since environmental, labour and food safety standards are far from the same as here," said Gaudette, adding that 30 per cent of the beef consumed in Canada already comes from abroad, as the local industry has been unable to meet domestic

demand in recent years.

Beef producers are supported by several Conservative and Bloc Québécois MPs, including Jacques Gourde, Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay and Sébastien Lemire.

The Conservatives have accused the Liberals of undermining Canada's agri-food industry.

"Will the minister commit today to protecting Canadian cattle producers and exempting agriculture from any Mercosur trade agreement?" asked Saskatchewan MP Steven Bonk during a recent Question Period in the House of Commons.

Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand noted that Canada had concluded 20 trade agreements over the past six months across four continents.

"We are creating market opportunities for Canadians and Canadian farmers around the world," she replied. "Take China, for example; take Mexico, for example."

The global economic uncertainty caused by the Trump administration in the United States has also helped break the deadlock in negotiations between Mercosur and the European Union, which had been stalled for more than 25 years.

In the agreement reached in January, the European Union chose to protect its beef industry. The agreement does not provide for duty-free imports of beef, but rather a quota equivalent to 1.5 per cent of current production. Thus, 99,000 tonnes of beef from these South American countries will be eligible for a reduced 7.5-per-cent tariff on the European continent.

Forestry worker's death could have been prevented: coroner

Frederic Serre
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

The fatal incident that claimed the life of a forestry worker on a farm in the tiny community of Melbourne in Quebec's Eastern Townships last year should never have happened, says an investigation by the *Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail* (CNESST), after releasing its report into the incident.

The CNESST ruled that common sense would have saved the life of the worker at Les Entreprises E. Jacques on Oct. 9, 2025, on a private woodlot near Chemin Champigny in Melbourne – a village located north of Sherbrooke.

In its report, released May 19, the investigation determined that the worker died after a tree that had been cut was left standing and fell on him.

The investigators said that this accident could have been prevented, particularly if the felled tree had been brought to the ground using a skidder or another safe method, or if a danger zone with a no-entry restriction had been established.

On the day of the accident, the forestry worker was in the woodlot in Melbourne and was busy cutting down trees. Equipped with a chainsaw and moving on foot, he began cutting the trees but left them standing. While performing his task, one of the trees he had cut and left standing, which was unstable, began to fall. The worker, who was in the tree's path, was struck and crushed under the tree. Emergency services were called to the scene, and the worker was transported to the hospital, where he was declared dead.

In its investigation, the CNESST blamed the accident on bad cutting techniques combined with the accumulation of standing trees that allowed one of the trees to fall, striking the worker who was in its path and pinning him to the ground.

The CNESST determined that supervision of the worker was inadequate, as he was using work methods that did not comply with best practices.

The investigation said the accident would not have happened if the worker had used a chainsaw to completely bring down the tree.

The CNESST urged forestry workers to improve their training, saying they should undergo "theoretical and practical training in occupational health and safety related to the Ministry of Education's "Health and Safety in Manual Felling course."

The CNESST said Les Entreprises E. Jacques should have verified proper felling techniques using the document titled "Monitoring Form – Manual Felling" from the CNESST, adding that all training centres will now be instructed to read the manual.

Trends in agriculture

TINT MEDIA/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

It is OK for technology to help us save time, but we cannot forget to spend time with friends and neighbours.

The new age is all about saving time

But maybe what we need to do is find time to check in on each other

Chris Judd
The Advocate

We all should sit in a quiet room from time to time and just think about where we are and what's going on around us.

Technology is moving faster than we can adapt. In just a few years, we have moved from using a pencil and paper to put down our thoughts to allowing artificial intelligence to write a story that it thinks is our own thoughts.

Grandpa never drove a car. When heading home from town, he just pointed the horse towards home, and the horse could take him home by itself. Now, there are cars that take you anywhere that there is a signal for GPS.

My latest truck can steer itself, travel whatever speed I select, slow down if it gets too close to another vehicle in front of me, and speed up once I pull out to pass. But, I have personally watched tractors and other new expensive machines "shut down" unexpectantly when a "glitch" in the computer system happens.

Farmers now can get robotic milkers that milk the cows by themselves, can mix and deliver a predetermined ration to the cattle by itself. The robotic system can even "spit out" reports about the health of a cow that can take all day to read. These reports will outline in detail how much milk she gave and when, how much feed she ate, her temperature, her weight, if she might be sick or coming into estrus, and provide dozens more pieces of information.

If those robots that feed and clean the barn, milk and keep track of every occurrence that happened suddenly gets a "glitch," it calls you. And all this happens 24 hours a day.

If the electricity suddenly goes off, everything stops until it is restored.

But no fear. For many thousands of dollars, the farmer can buy an "automatically" controlled standby generator that starts up and switches the power supply from the power line to the power from the generator. That, too, however, triggers a phone call to inform the farmer to check on all the other robots.

A little fuse can shut down a $1-million tractor at the back of the farm. And if the farmer forgot his cell phone at home, he will have to walk back to the shop, barn or house.

To fix that little fuse or relay may take a technician from the dealership to come out on a service call that can cost hundreds of dollars, "plus" the little $10 part.

When we visit our doctor for that yearly visit, the doctor checks all our vital signs and usually asks for a series of blood tests that "could be" checked by AI, but while the doctor is checking you over, his eyes are watching you for any little thing that is not normal. His ears are listening to how you respond or talk. I'm not ready for AI to assess my health yet.

Today, we do most of our communication by computer or messaging. When we chat with our family, friends, co-workers or the doctor, those personal visits are analyzed by "real" people, and they notice little nuances that a computer can never see.

We used to take time to visit or talk to family, neighbours and friends every few days. We noticed little differences in their health, weight, mannerisms, speech, etc.

Sixty some years ago, when we delivered our milk to the little dairy down the road in eight-gallon cans every day, the local dairy farmers met every morning. One morning George had his hand all bandaged up when he brought his milk to the dairy.

Dad asked him: "What happened your hand, George?"

George replied: "Oh, the barn door slammed shut with the wind and crushed my fingers."

On the way home, Dad stopped at George's place and asked: "George, what really happened to your hand?"

George said: "By dammed, Louis, I knew that you knew that there was no wind this morning to blow the door shut. I stuck my hand in the exhaust fan to see if it was working!"

Dad looked at George's hand and cleaned it up for him before re-bandaging it.

Today, with all the stresses in the world and fluctuating prices, parts availabilities and rising mental pressure, we must take more time checking on our friends and neighbours.

Make up an excuse to borrow something, or just have a five-minute chat. It can be a lifesaver to a troubled person.

Friendship is priceless and "time spent" will come back a thousand times. The most troubling things to a person with "mental fatigue" is thinking that they are not needed any more or a burden to others.

Young Farmers

Five generations deep:
A young dairy devotee finds her calling

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

For Grace Tannahill, dairy farming was never a choice she had to make. It was simply where life began. The barn at her family's dairy operation in Ormstown in the Châteauguay Valley was her classroom long before any school was. And at the age of 8, a calf she helped train set a course she hasn't veered from since.

"I have always been surrounded by agriculture and have many good childhood memories," said the 18-year-old Macdonald Campus student. "One of my favourite memories has got to be getting picked up by my grandpa after school every day and going down to the barn to help with chores."

Tannahill is currently finishing her second year of the Farm Management and Technology (FMT) program and will return in the fall for her third and final year, on track to graduate in the spring of 2027. Unlike some of her classmates who will take over a family operation, Tannahill has her sights set on a career that lets her support the producers she grew up among – as a herd specialist or nutritionist in the dairy industry.

The farm that shaped her is a deep-rooted one. Originally established five generations ago, Tannahill's grandparents transferred ownership to her uncles Christopher and Simon Rember – making it one of the enduring agricultural stories of the region.

Tannahill's bond with the place stretches back to early childhood. She remembers walking through the barns giving cows a scratch behind the ears, helping unload straw and hay in the summers when the extended family would all turn out together, and getting rides on the hay wagon once the work was done. And then there was her grandmother's kitchen afterward.

"I can't forget enjoying grandma's chocolate chip cookies with a glass of cold iced tea when all the work was finished," she said.

But it was a smaller moment that crystallized everything. At 8 years old, she watched her younger cousin Karlee Rember begin training a calf, and something clicked.

"That's when I realized I wanted to do the same," Tannahill said. "That's where it all started – my passion for the dairy industry."

From there, she began helping her grandfather with daily chores, and over the years took on greater independence, with a particular interest in calf care.

She also carried that passion into the show ring. An early memory is washing and prepping a heifer for the Ormstown Fair alongside her cousin Jackson Rember, and she has continued showing ever since, including a showmanship class at the Huntingdon Fair in 2025, competing for Money Making Ayrshires.

To Mac and back again

Tannahill enrolled at Macdonald Campus in the fall of 2024, moving directly from high school graduation into the FMT program. For her, the program isn't a detour from agriculture – it's a way to deepen what she already knows, and to develop the technical expertise that will let her give back to the industry.

"I know I will stay rooted in the dairy industry because I want to give back to farmers who make it possible," she said. "I'm especially interested in roles connected to calf care, genetics or milk testing, and I can see myself working with an organization that focuses on improving herd health and supporting producers."

Her path into those specialized roles got a boost this spring when she was awarded a Warren Grapes bursary from the Quebec Farmers' Association – a recognition she learned about through school and decided to pursue. She still recalls the moment her name was called.

"When we were sitting waiting for the names to be called, I kept looking around the room thinking about who could be chosen, and then I heard words that sounded exactly like my name," she said. "I looked over at my friends and a big smile appeared on my face. I knew my parents and grandparents would be very proud of me."

Pressures facing the next generation

Tannahill is clear-eyed about what young people entering agriculture are up against. The challenges she names are both environmental and economic: unpredictable weather, drying soils, shrinking water access, and the persistent pressure of high land, fuel and equipment costs.

"Weather in the past few years has been very unpredictable and is getting more extreme," she said. "Farmers also face a high price for land, fuel and equipment, which can make it even more difficult to produce food and stay profitable."

COURTESY: GRACE TANNAHILL

Grace Tannahill feeds a calf at Riverbye Farm, the five-generation operation run by her uncles Christopher and Simon Rember. Calf care has been a passion since childhood.

For her generation specifically, she sees the barriers as steeper than those faced by farmers before them. High start-up costs and unpredictable markets make the entry point harder than it once was. But she doesn't see those challenges as reasons to step back.

"For this next generation to be successful, they must show passion, innovation, commitment and determination to this industry," she said. "Young farmers can still build a future in agriculture, but the path is tougher than it used to be."

What the public doesn't see

Like many young producers and agriculture students, Tannahill is frustrated by the gap between what farming actually demands and what the public understands about it. The science, the commitment to animal welfare, the environmental stewardship – none of it, she says, is adequately appreciated.

"Many people don't realize what it takes or where the food on their tables comes from," she said.

"Farmers work hard to care for their animals, protect the environment, and produce safe food that meets the population's needs and expectations – all while dealing with constant changes in weather, costs and many other challenges."

Her message to those outside of agriculture is direct: stop working against farmers and start working with them. Without the people who produce food, she says, there is no food – and no future.

"Agriculture is important to everyday life because it provides the food, clothing and products people use every day," she said. "Which is why people need to be educated and support the people who produce our food."

For Tannahill, that education is ongoing – inside the classroom at Macdonald Campus, and in the barn at Riverbye Farm, where the cows still get a scratch behind the ears from the girl who grew up among them.

Editorial

AWANA JF/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

A developer is seeking permission to carry out natural hydrogen exploration work on farmland in the Abitibi-Témiscamingue region, but there is still no regulations that outline how this should be done, nor are there mechanisms in place to protect agricultural land.

Martin Caron
UPA President

White hydrogen development:

Exploration projects in Abitibi-Témiscamingue push need for proper regulation

On June 4, I had the opportunity to participate in parliamentary consultations on Bill 17, the legislation that controls the storage of natural gas and the pipelines used to transport it. I was accompanied by economic and legal experts from the UPA and Pascal Rheault, the president of the UPA Abitibi-Témiscamingue federation.

Over the past two years, a number of farmers in the Témiscamingue region have been approached by a developer seeking permission to carry out natural hydrogen exploration work on their land.

However, the absence of legislative or regulatory framework for this resource (also known as white hydrogen) has raised significant concerns, particularly regarding landowners' responsibilities, decommissioning requirements for exploratory wells, and the cumulative impacts of unregulated activities on farmland use and agricultural operations.

Regulation welcome

The government's initiative to regulate this emerging energy sector is, therefore, welcome. However, the absence of a mechanism to exclude private land, specifically farmland, from exploration and production activities – unlike the approach taken in the 2024 reform of the *Mining Act* (Bill 63) – is a significant concern.

Excluding land from mining development helps reduce pressure on agricultural land, improves predictability for producers and increases public acceptance of projects. This approach should, therefore, also apply to white hydrogen, while still allowing MRCs to partially or fully lift this default exclusion after consulting local stakeholders.

The bill also provides mechanisms that allow the minister to adapt hydrogen-related activities to vulnerable areas and ensure the protection of people, property and the environment. However, no protective mechanism is provided for agricultural land; this omission must be addressed.

The oversight of pilot projects must also be strengthened.

CPTAQ should be consulted

While it is important to support innovation, the current provisions allow too much flexibility and create a significant risk of unintended consequences.

The UPA has recommended requiring authorization from the Commission de protection du territoire agricole du Québec for hydrogen-related activities, like exploration projects, pilot projects and production activities.

Among other recommendations aimed at better protecting our food supply, we propose imposing conditions tailored to agricultural environments (minimum distances between hydrogen operations and livestock buildings or water wells, appropriate mitigation measures, etc.) and guarantees of full and long-term soil restoration.

The government's intention to regulate white hydrogen and structure the development of this emerging sector is a step in the right direction. In its current form, however, the bill creates a worrying imbalance: it makes it easier to establish new activities on agricultural land without providing the minimum safeguards to protect its integrity and long-term sustainability.

White hydrogen development must take place in harmony with agricultural land, not at its expense. Structural changes are, therefore, needed to ensure that irreversible interventions on agricultural land are not permitted without safeguards proportionate to the risks involved.

The Resourceful Naturalist

Research points to how we can make plastic from plants

Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

TAYLER DERDEN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Research has shown that bamboo, and now hemp, can be used to make plastics. And they can be grown on less-than-ideal farmland.

In science class we were told crude oil comes from ancient algae and plankton that got pressure-cooked a really long time. I took notes, and I bet anyone who's a patient sort could do it at home:

1. Let marine organisms die and pile up on the ocean floor for a few hundred million years.
2. Cover these with sediment (clay, silt or sand, per your taste) up to 6,000 metres deep.
3. Go knit sweaters or play Sudoku for 65 million years while the organic matter is cooked by heat from the Earth's core turns to oil and rises up, drop by drop, until it's trapped under impermeable layers.
4. To check if the oil is ready, insert a drill bit 2,000 to 4,000 metres down into the Earth's crust.

Although there are still an estimated 1.6 trillion to 1.7 trillion barrels of recoverable crude oil left in the ground, at the pace the world is using it, this equates to about 50 years' worth of oil. On the bright side, oil is still being formed by the same planetary processes that gave us our current supply. The downside is that it's happening at a rate of just a few thousand barrels per day.

Plant-based fuels exist

Given that we all have some kind of vegetable oil on our kitchen shelves, it's clear we can turn organic matter into oil in somewhat less than a million years. While plant-based fuels can take us part-way down the road to energy independence, new research says plants could free up a great deal of oil now being used in other applications.

We know veggie-based fuels work. Although large-scale biodiesel production didn't take off until the 1980s, Rudolf Diesel, the guy who invented the diesel engine, demonstrated one of his engines running on peanut oil at the 1900 World Exposition in Paris. Corn-based ethanol for gas engines has a long history as well. Henry Ford designed his 1908 Model T to run on the stuff, and the U.S. military produced corn ethanol during World War II to address fuel shortages.

Biofuels too expensive

There are a number of reasons biofuels can't replace fossil fuels. One roadblock is that biofuels cost between 75- and 130-per-cent more to produce than petroleum fuels. Also, there isn't enough land in the world.

For example, in the U.S., corn-based ethanol makes up 10 per cent of the gasoline supply there, but it eats almost half the U.S. annual corn crop. And while biodiesel accounts for 3 per cent of the U.S. diesel budget, it guzzles more than 40 per cent of the soybean oil they make.

But crude oil has other applications in addition to fuel. Petroleum is a crucial input to many fertilizers, medications and synthetic fabrics. Plastics manufacturing is an especially oil-hungry use, currently hogging about 8 per cent of the world's oil production, a figure that is projected to rise to 20 per cent by 2050. Fortunately, it looks like cost-effective, superior quality plastics made from non-food crops are in the pipeline.

Plant plastics not new

Plant-based plastics are nothing new. From the ancient Maya, who vulcanized rubber-tree sap to make rubber rain gear, water vessels, and more, to the discovery of cellulose plastic in 1838, and back to Henry Ford with his 1941 soy-based plastic car body. Today's bioplastics, made largely from corn or sugar cane, have serious drawbacks. Aside from the fact that they divert food crops, they are more fragile than oil-based plastics, and cost more to produce. They also can't be recycled due to their high toxin content. Hardly a panacea.

Just in the last year, scientists have found ways to make high-strength, fully biodegradable plastics at a competitive price from two unlikely plants. The first study, published in October 2025, identified ways to turn bamboo into plastic that researchers say is on par or slightly better than oil-based plastic like ABS in terms of strength and thermal stability. ABS is hard, moulded plastic used in toys, car parts, and 3-D printing. They also claim bamboo plastic costs about the same to produce as conventional plastic.

Although the research team was based in China, bamboo production is not limited to Asia. There are bamboo species that can grow in much of southern Canada, and on a wide range of soil types, including marginal soils not well-suited to food crops. Bamboo represents a possible income source for farmers if demand for bamboo plastic takes off.

Latest study published this year

In the second study, published in April 2026, researchers from the University of Connecticut devised a way to make plastic from hemp, a crop historically grown for the long, strong fibres in its stems that can be woven into cloth and cordage. Like bamboo-based plastics, hemp plastic is said to be extremely strong and stable at high temperatures. Among other uses, hemp can be made into clear plastic used in packaging as well as beverage bottles that are free of harmful plasticizers like phallates.

While not native to North America, hemp was first planted here by British colonists in the early 1600s, when it was needed for sails, ropes, and rigging on ships. It was again in high demand during both world wars. Hemp is a type of cannabis, like marijuana, but with a negligible THC content, marijuana's active ingredient. Today it is mainly grown as a source of CBD oil, which is used medicinally to treat joint pain, insomnia and other conditions.

If bamboo and hemp, two crops that are easy to grow, even on less-than-ideal farmland, can replace some of the current 8 per cent of the word's crude oil now going into plastics, I'd say that's better than waiting millions of years for more oil.

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

News

HIGH-SPEED RAIL: Impact on farmland permanent

From Page 1

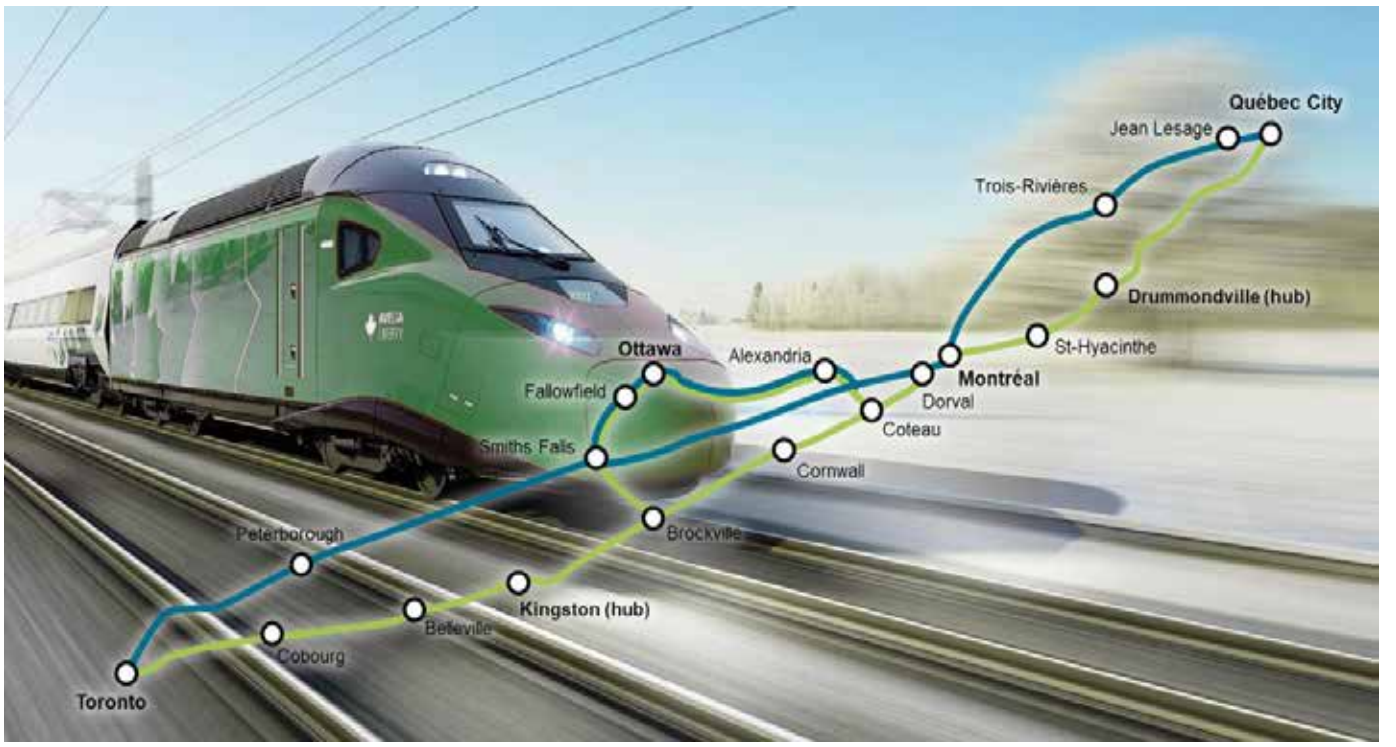
"The demonstration aims to raise awareness among elected officials and the public about the many impacts the (high-speed rail) project would have on the agricultural sector and affected municipalities," the UPA said in a statement.

"These impacts include potential expropriations, as well as the effects of the project on farms and surrounding properties. The rail line's proposed route would have significant consequences for agricultural operations, local businesses, the natural environment and the vitality of local communities."

Farmer Hubert McClelland of Cantley, Que., north of Gatineau, planned to attend the demonstration in Ottawa. In a statement on social media, he explained why he was lending his voice to the protest:

"I want to protect farmland. Only 2 per cent of Quebec is arable land, only 5 per cent of Canada is arable. We have already removed a farmland area in Canada the size of Nova Scotia for development.

"The high-speed rail is for the urban elite," McClelland continued, "to save time going from one big city to another, while the rural people have to spend many more hours to (get to) their farm, or school, or hospital on the other side of the Alto (line). Modern feudalism it is!"



ADVOCATE FILE PHOTO

Farmers' groups in both Quebec and Ontario are stepping up their push against plans for high-speed rail project between Quebec City and Toronto. The rail route could cut through many farms, creating devastating affects to their operations.

Both Conservative and Bloc Québécois MPs attended the protest.

The day before the demonstration in Ottawa, Parti Québécois leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon said a PQ government would withdraw Quebec from the project.

"We don't have the luxury, nor the interest, in potentially paying $200 billion for a train for which the primary objective is a desire for 'nation building' and reinforcement of Canadian unity by the federal Liberal government," St-Pierre Plamondon wrote on X.

The PQ leader's $200-billion figure is much higher than the $60 billion to $90 billion Alto says it needs to build the project. But based on the PQ's estimate, St-Pierre Plamondon put forward the idea that cancelling the project would result in Ottawa handing over $40 billion to Quebec, which Quebec would put toward other infrastructure projects.

That statement was quickly targeted by both CAQ and Liberals MNAs, including Quebec Premier Christine Frechette, who said St-Pierre Plamondon does not understand how projects and government work.

The proposed high-speed rail network would connect Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto along a 1,000-kilometre corridor running along the north shore of the St. Lawrence River in Quebec, crossing through Trois Rivières, Laval and the west end of the province, cutting through eastern Ontario farm country to Ottawa, Peterborough and Toronto.

The UPA estimates that the first phase of the project that would see 200 kilometres of rail line built between Montreal and Ottawa would cut across 1,700 properties, including at least 500 farms.

In April, a number of municipal officials in eastern Ontario issued letters opposed to the project, while in May, county officials in the eastern part of the province passed formal resolutions to refuse to grant Alto access to county-owned land, preventing environmental studies.

Municipalities in Quebec are taking similar action. In June, the Town of Rigaud, located next to the Ontario border, passed a resolution calling for formal in-person consultations on the project be held in the municipality.

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 metres wide. Ground-breaking for the Montreal-Ottawa section is scheduled for 2029.

CONGRATULATIONS!

COURTESY CVR FOUNDATION

Edward Mason was the winner of a $500 Warren Grapes Educational Fund scholarship on May 31 during graduation ceremonies at Châteauguay Valley High School in Ormstown. Retired farmer Peter Finlayson presented the award, which is provided by the Quebec Farmers' Association. Mason, who lives on a dairy farm in Ormstown, plans to continue his studies at Macdonald Campus of McGill University, where he has been accepted in the Farm Management and Technology program.

Climate of change

FUELPOSITIVE/PRODUCER.COM

Producing green fertilizer on the farm still faces a few hurdles – like high start-up costs – but could eventually give farmers control over their costs.

'Green fertilizer' systems could change game – and lower prices

Christopher Bonasia
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

Makers of "green fertilizer" say their product can use renewable energies to meet farmers' fertility needs without the price spikes from global oil markets.

Prices for synthetic nitrogen-based fertilizers spiked earlier this spring when tanker traffic through the Strait of Hormuz was stopped after the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran. Prices for some fertilizers, like urea, have started to go down, but remain significantly higher than at the start of the year. While the impacts were somewhat softened by many farmers having already purchased fertilizer before the war, lingering high input costs could continue affecting the sector into next year.

But there are companies making green fertilizer that can fill the gap and deliver nitrogen to farmers without risk of price spikes.

While synthetic nitrogen fertilizers are normally made by combining airborne nitrogen with hydrogen sourced from fossil fuels – often natural gas – green nitrogen-based fertilizers use the same process, but with hydrogen from renewable energy-powered electrolysis.

Lessens reliance on fossil fuels

The difference between the two products isn't just a matter of lowering emissions; by using a hydrogen feedstock from renewable energy sources, green fertilizers don't need to rely on traded fossil fuel commodities, and so can more reliably be purchased at stable prices.

One company in Canada is marketing a system that can produce green ammonia fertilizers on farm. FuelPositive, a clean-tech company based in Manitoba, is piloting a decentralized, small-scale green ammonia system that individual farmers can use to produce their own fertilizer. The pilot project is being run at R&L Acres, a crop farm near Sperling, Manitoba, to test using a containerized unit that will be able to produce 100 metric tonnes of green ammonia annually. The unit is powered entirely by sustainable electricity and avoids up to two tonnes of CO_2 emissions per tonne of ammonia produced.

Not quite there yet

Granted, FuelPositive's single on-farm fertilizer system isn't "about to roll over conventional ways of farming," as the Manitoba Cooperator wrote in a March 17 op-ed. Not only could it pose challenges for provincial energy systems, but it also had a high up-front cost of an estimated $4.5 million in 2024. But if farmers can overcome that hurdle, a 2024 analysis by the Western Producer indicates that farms would be able to produce fertilizer at a cost of about $948 per tonne, compared to around $1,100 per tonne to source synthetic ammonia off-farm.

Producing fertilizer on the farm changes the uncertainty of having to make fertilizer purchase decisions months in advance, said R&L co-owner Curtis Hiebert in a statement issued by FuelPositive in April.

"It gives us control and stability…. Not having to pre-buy in the middle of summer or chase the market would take a lot of pressure off," Heibert added.

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

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

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

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

Membership Application

Last name ..... First name .....

Address ..... Phone .....

Fax ..... E-mail .....

PRICE

Agricultural or forestry producer, rural resident or retired farmer:

☐ 1 year $68.99 [$60 + $3 GST (5%) + $5.99 TVQ (9.975%)]
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GST No. 107 867 814 RT 001 QST No. 100 611 322 9 TQ 001

Signature .....

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MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES

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

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

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

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

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

Cynthia Gordon, Bringham
Gibb Drury, Alcove
Andrius Valevicius, Canton de Hatley

You can go online at quebecfarmers.org to renew your membership today!

QFA videoconferences

Save the date!

Apple Trees for Any Farm: Fruit Trees in Quebec

THURSDAY, JUNE 25, 2026 7:30 P.M.

With Stefan Sobkowiak

Quebec's climate excels at cold-hardy fruit production, like apples, pears, plums and cherries. But what are the best ways to get started and maintain a healthy orchard? Selecting specific rootstocks and cultivars, along with using proper grafting techniques, are key to surviving harsh winters and bearing delicious fruit.

Stefan Sobkowiak is Canada's best-known promoter of permaculture and orchard maintenance. Through his hugely popular YouTube channel, "The Permaculture Orchard," Sobkowiak has shared his knowledge with hundreds of thousands, and has delivered more than 600 lectures in France, Switzerland, Sweden, Belgium, New Zealand and the U.S.

In this videoconference, Sobkowiak will share his expertise about starting and maintaining fruit trees in the Quebec climate.

Note: This meeting is on a THURSDAY.

Zoom link: https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84512887422?pwd=3vnUFspoVVFgbntwoqn2bgfMyD9m50.1

Meeting ID: 845 1288 7422
Passcode: 186932

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

The Forum Report

Sheep farmer spins vision of food, fibre and climate action

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

For Brenda Hsueh, raising sheep at Black Sheep Farm in Grey County, Ont., was never just about producing meat. It was always about the whole animal – and, by extension, the whole farm, the whole landscape and a more resilient local economy built from the ground up, one fleece at a time.

"Sheep are the triple threat – meat, milk and fibre for textiles," Hsueh said. "Fibre not just for textiles, but for insulation for your houses, for wool pellets for your soil, as a slow-release nitrogen fertilizer."

Hsueh spoke in a recent videoconference organized by the Quebec Farmers' Association, sharing a journey that began not on a farm but in the financial industry in Toronto, and arrived, eventually, at a 40-acre property outside Owen Sound, Ont., that she has been methodically transforming into a model of agroecological livestock production.

Her farm runs 39 ewes – she estimated 70 lambs this spring, a rate of about 1.7 per ewe – on 25 acres of rotationally grazed pasture. The flock is a deliberately mixed group of primarily Romney and Gotland genetics, with an increasing proportion of British longwool breeds selected for their characteristic fibre lustre. She is also breeding heavily for colour.

Black sheep never shunned

"I want all the black sheep, all the dark brown sheep, all the grey sheep I can get," she explained. "If you have different shades of black to brown to grey, you can make a whole range of natural colours just by mixing different proportions – and we don't have to have a product that absolutely needs dyeing."

That commitment to natural colour is part of a broader philosophy. Dyeing textiles carries its own environmental footprint, and Hsueh's goal is to produce a finished product whose beauty begins with the animal. Her sheep also benefit from winter bale grazing – a practice she credits both for animal health and for fibre quality.

"One of the banes of fleeces is vegetable matter," she said. "With bale grazing, they're not putting their heads into a manger and pulling out hay that then drops plant matter all over them."

Currently, she estimates recovering 56 to 57 per cent of her raw clip as finished fibre – a figure she is working to improve.

Finding right processor

Processing has been the great bottleneck. Hsueh brings approximately 200 pounds of fleece a year to Wave Fibre Mill in Parry Sound, a mid-sized Ontario processor she describes as a breakthrough in an otherwise sparse infrastructure landscape. Before Wave opened, no facility in Ontario could handle her volume without requiring pre-washed fleeces.

"When I'm producing 200 pounds of fleece a year, I can't wash those all first," she said.

From that raw clip she produces rovings, yarns and – most ambitiously – woven fabric, the first run of which was used to make a herringbone wool cloth that has since become the centrepiece of her brand.

That fabric has found its way into collaborations with clothing designers in British Columbia and a boutique in Toronto, where a cropped jacket made from the cloth was engineered to use just one and a half yards of material.

"People are very conscious of how valuable and wonderful this material is," Hsueh said. "And they're not wasting it at all."

Meat part of the mix

Lamb meat rounds out the farm's production. She sells direct – frozen bundles delivered to customers, with a geographic split that tells its own story about rural markets: roughly 40 per cent of her lamb sales are local to Grey County, while 60 per cent go to buyers in the greater Toronto area.

"Owen Sound has 20-odd thousand people," she said. "Versus the GTA, which has millions. It's just a numbers game."

Her path to farming was unconventional. After leaving the financial sector, Hsueh spent time at Everdale, a farm outside Toronto, where she worked with sheep, goats and cattle before deciding that sheep were the right fit – partly out of affinity, partly out of practicality.

"I am five-foot-two-and-three-quarters," she said with characteristic frankness. "So I did not want to get into an animal I could not handle."

COURTESY OF BRENDA HSUEH

Brenda Hsueh in the century-old barn at Black Sheep Farm in Grey County, Ont., where her flock of Romney-Gotland cross sheep – bred for naturally coloured fleeces – forms the foundation of her pastured lamb and fibre operation.

Size matters

Hsueh started the farm in 2009, beginning with market gardening as a lower-capital entry point while she slowly built her flock and her knowledge. She has since aged some of her ewes past a decade on pasture, culling for mothering ability and grass performance rather than pushing for maximum lambing rates.

"If you just buy in a flock of a hundred all at once with no experience in sheep, that's a really steep learning curve," she cautioned. "I don't recommend that for anyone."

On the land side, Hsueh is expanding into silvopasture, planting dense rows of hybrid poplar, willow and alder at two-foot spacing within her paddocks. The goal is shade, forage, and long-term carbon storage – with full acknowledgment that she is running an experiment.

"Most of the silvopasture examples are in the States," Hsueh said. "And even their most northern areas are not as north as us."

She is also attentive to soil organic matter, noting that every 1-per-cent increase holds roughly 20,000 extra litres of water during rainfall events.

"I don't think any of us should take for granted that we will forever be a water-rich province," Hsueh said. "We need to be putting in the plant life, increasing our soil health, so that we can retain the water that's needed to give us resilience."

Economics and environment

Hsueh has spent five years working with Farmers for Climate Solutions, and her view of agriculture's role in the climate crisis is neither naively optimistic nor defeatist. It is, above all, systemic. She sees the decision to farm regeneratively as an economic one as much as an environmental one, arguing that farmers who reduce their dependence on purchased inputs while improving soil health are ultimately improving their own resilience. The structural obstacles are real, she acknowledges – crop insurance regimes that can penalize cover cropping, debt loads tied to expensive machinery, and agronomic advice linked to input sales. But the direction, Hsueh insists, is clear.

"As a farmer, I have great freedom compared with before," she said. "I may not have financial freedom in the sense of how much money I used to make, but I chose this. I continue to choose this. And I would not go back to the other job for any money. It's never boring. I can absolutely say it is never boring."

Lactanet – Canadian Network for Dairy Excellence

Strategies for drying off high-production cows

Brooke McNeil,
Knowledge Transfer Specialist
Elouise Molgat,
Advisory Veterinarian
and
Bruna Mion,
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Lactanet

PEOPLEIMAGES/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Studies have shown that reducing the milking frequency and changing a cow's diet are two strategies that, when combined, decrease the milk yield in the dry-off process.

How should a cow be dried off?

STEP 1:

Reduce milk production to at least 15 kg/cow/day

The National Mastitis Council recommends milk production be reduced to at least 15 kilograms per day before dry-off. Drying off cows that are still producing a lot of milk increases the risk of udder infections and mastitis during the dry period and in the subsequent lactation. High production before dry-off can also negatively affect the cow's comfort and well-being.

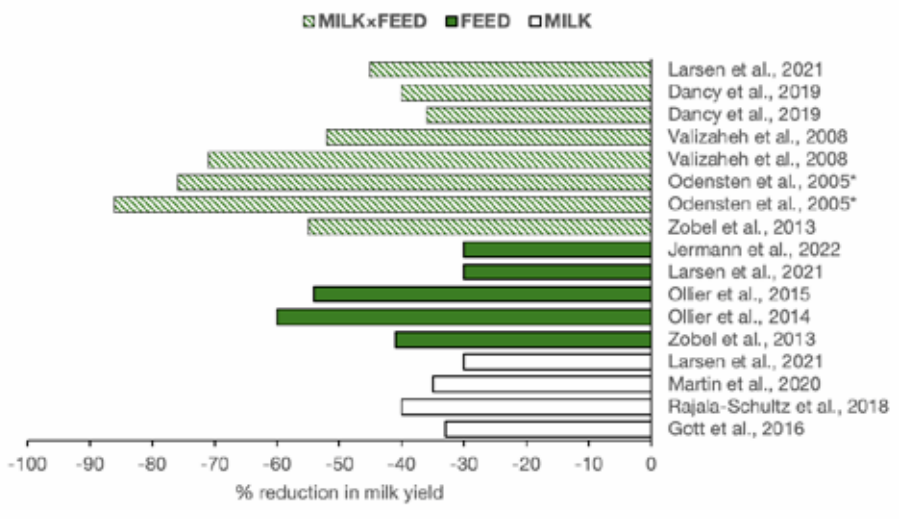
Reducing milk yield before dry-off helps protect the cow during this vulnerable time. However, genetic selection and improvements in nutrition and management practices have increased average milk yield over time. While maximizing performance is a goal for many dairies, it can make it more difficult to achieve lower milk production at dry-off.

Dry-off management remains an important topic today, and additional or alternative strategies for drying off high-producing cows are needed and in development.

Milk production can be reduced using a few different strategies:

1. **Change the diet:** Reducing the amount of concentrate offered to cows, or changing from high-protein, high-energy forages to lower-energy forages can be helpful in reducing milk production, without reducing the amount of forage available. Talk to your herd nutritionist to ensure dietary needs are met.
2. **Milk frequency:** Gradually reducing milking frequency before dry-off can efficiently reduce milk production. Different protocols can be used, like intermittent milking, where cows must still be milked at least once per day. This strategy is most effective at reducing milk production when combined with diet changes.
3. **Oral dry cow boluses:** Made up of anionic minerals, oral dry cow boluses cause a reduction in dry-matter intake for a short period, leading to a reduction in milk production.
4. **Change the environment:** Moving the cow to another pen may help to reduce production and may facilitate the change in diet.
5. **Vaccinations:** A recent study showed that administering a vaccination 11 days before dry-off helped reduce milk production before dry-off, lower inflammation and improve performance in the next lactation.

Figure 1. Shows the reductions in milk yield observed in studies evaluating dietary changes, altered milking frequency and a combination of these approaches.



Decrease in milk yield (%) from the beginning of the dry-off procedure to the day before the last milking using different strategies (MILK = reduced milking frequency; FEED = feed or nutrient restriction; MILK × FEED = reduced milking frequency paired with feeding changes before dry-off) in studies involving dairy cows producing more than 15 kg/d of milk at the start of treatments. *Reduction achieved at the last milking after a day of no milking.

STEP 2:

Effectively seal the teat canal

Cows have a natural way of protecting themselves during the dry-off period. The lining of the teat canal forms a plug after a cow is dried off, called the Mucin Plug. It is both a physical and chemical antibacterial defence barrier. However, many cows often fail to form a good plug. For this reason, commercial internal teat sealants can be a helpful tool, though strict attention to application and removal procedures is crucial. When applied with excellent hygiene and correct technique, internal teat sealants can help protect cows from new udder infections during the dry period.

STEP 3:

Monitor the success of your dry-off approach

Health status metrics and the somatic cell count (SCC) of fresh dairy cows should be tracked. Lactanet's Dry Off and Fresh Monitoring Report is one helpful tool to assess both the effectiveness of the dry-off strategy and overall dry-period management practices on udder health. Similar metrics can be generated using herd management software that imports testday SCC data.

Keeping a close eye on infection rates and clinical mastitis events in early lactation is critical for understanding the impact of any changes to dryoff treatment protocols. It is crucial to work with your herd veterinarian to establish a dry-off protocol for your herd; they can help equip you with the right tools, ensure you are gathering reliable data and monitor its success.

What advantages come from following best practices during dry-off?

1. Less stress for cows starting their dry period (improved cow health and welfare)
2. Supports the success of dry cow therapy and cure rates
3. Reduced herd SCC, new infections and antimicrobial use
4. Higher milk quality
5. Reduced involuntary culling rates
6. Improved production, reproduction, longevity and profitability.

Grains

New regulations sow concern in the agricultural community

In early May, Sylvain Pion, president of the Producteurs de grains du Québec, shared an editorial with a number of media outlets and MNAs that outlined the grain sector's concerns about the draft regulation respecting agri-environmental practices (RPAE).

In February, the Quebec government released the draft regulation respecting agri-environmental practices (RPAE), which will replace the current Agricultural Operations Regulation, referred to in French as the *Règlement sur les exploitations agricoles* (REA). The public consultation ended in April, and it is expected that the new rules will be approved in the coming months.

The striking title of the regulation caught people's attention as soon as it was announced. By talking about "agri-environmental practices," the Quebec Agriculture Ministry, known by its French acronym MAPAQ, is no longer limited to regulating the impact of agriculture on the environment. Instead, it suggests a willingness to intervene directly in the way farmers manage their soil, fertilize their crops and organize their production systems. For many producers, this change in vocabulary is significant. It reflects a shift toward tighter control of agricultural practices to the detriment of flexibility, local adaptability and producers' expertise.

Nevertheless, the draft regulation contains some important advances. These include lifting the moratorium on farmland expansion, relaxing certain rules for spraying and spreading fertilizers and pesticides, and better protection against excessive municipal bylaws. These measures address long-standing demands of the agricultural community and are steps in the right direction. However, they are part of a regulatory package that remains very restrictive overall.

PHOTO BY SYLVAIN PION

Sylvain Pion, president of the Producteurs de grains du Québec, says new regulations could impact the way farmers manage their soil, fertilize their crops and organize their production systems.

The RPAE will impose stricter requirements for fertilization and soil protection. In particular, producers will have to reduce the use of fertilizers like phosphorus and plant cover crops on a large portion of their fields over the next few years. While there is broad consensus on the environmental goals of optimizing crop fertilization, reducing erosion and improving soil health, the rigid enforcement of previous practices raises issues about their feasibility and economic impacts. In addition, there are threats of significant financial penalties if the producer does not comply with a framework that remains largely subject to interpretation by MAPAQ.

The regulation also significantly transforms the role of agrologists. Whereas previously they had to plan fertilization needs in collaboration with growers, they will now have to check after the fact how much is actually applied to ensure compliance.

According to many agricultural stakeholders, including the Ordre des agronomes du Québec, these new responsibilities are major and difficult to shoulder in the short term due to a lack of sufficient resources. A postponement of the entry into force of the regulation has also been requested to allow a realistic amount of time for the sector to adapt.

Many agrologists are also expressing their discomfort with the role being given to them. By placing them at the centre of regulatory monitoring, MAPAQ risks changing their status of advisers to that of inspectors in the eyes of producers. This situation could weaken the relationship of trust that is essential to the proper functioning of agri-environmental plans.

If producers think of their agronomist as an arm of government control, they may be tempted to withhold information, which would ultimately undermine the effectiveness of the regulation.

Moreover, continuous improvement of agricultural practices is based on a fundamental principle: environmental performance cannot be separated from agronomic and economic performance. A practice may be desirable from an environmental point of view, but if it compromises yields, increases costs or weakens a farm's profitability, it becomes difficult to implement in the long term. For best practices to be truly adopted and maintained, they must allow agricultural businesses to remain productive, profitable and able to invest in their development.

In summary, even if there is a broad consensus on the environmental objectives set out in the RPAE, as confirmed by the support from MAPAQ and AAFC in pursuing the implementation of best agricultural practices, achieving this through the regulatory approach raises serious concerns.

However, the regulatory advances announced concerning the lifting of the moratorium, the relaxation of certain rules about spraying and spreading, as well as the protection against onerous municipal bylaws, cannot be weighed against excessive measures or measures that are ill adapted to the realities on the ground. They meet legitimate needs and should not serve as an implicit counterpart to a tightening of control, a loss of flexibility, and the imposition of blanket practices that may ultimately hinder both innovation and the viability of agricultural businesses.

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.*

"Win the Grain Caravan in Your Schoolyard" contest

Following a contest launched on the Grains du Québec social networks that received more than 280 entries, Alberte-Melançon School in Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix, south of St. Jean sur Richelieu, won the prize: the Grain Caravan visited its schoolyard May 22. Grade 3 students were able to learn more about grain production in Quebec, participate in various educational games, and taste some popcorn.

Grade 3 students at a school in Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix, south of St. Jean sur Richelieu learned about grains grown in Quebec when the Producteurs de grains du Québec's Caravan visited in May.

They also received a recipe booklet on how to cook breakfasts using Quebec grains with their parents! A sample of Quebec soy milk was also given to all the students at the school. To keep the learning going, the teacher received a set of tools she can use back in the classroom.

Registration deadline for the seeding

Grain producers interested in registering for the Advance Payments Program (APP) for the 2026–2027 year have until June 30, to submit their request for a preliminary advance.

Don't forget: since the 2024–2025 season, AppGrains has been the preferred way to process applications quickly and efficiently.

News

NAME/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Knowing the details of a farm's expenses allows operators, especially when margins are tight, to help determine likely level of risk versus reward when it comes to spending money to make money.

The hidden costs: Why tracking expenses builds profitability

Farm Credit Canada

Tracking expenses across each product line in your farm operation can help build your profits.

"When farmers take the time to track expenses separately by income-generating activity of their operation – whether it's crops, livestock or custom work – they start to see which areas are really pulling their weight and which ones might be draining resources," said Steven Tippe, senior product owner with FCC AgExpert.

Treating each piece of an operation like its own business can help farmers make smarter decisions about where to reinvest or seek greater efficiencies. It also provides lenders and partners with greater confidence in a farm's direction.

"We call these distinct operations on the farm 'enterprises,' " Tippe said.

And these enterprises provide an additional level of income and expense categorization.

"It's not just a fuel expense, but it's a fuel expense that's split at a user-defined percentage to specific enterprises," Tippe explained. "This additional level of income and expense categorization makes it possible to then generate a report that will allow the user to compare their income and expense entries across various enterprises rather than just at the whole farm level."

Risk versus reward

Using AgExpert's account enterprise tracking, producers can record income and expenses separately for each enterprise.

With that data, they're able to determine if, for example, that second application of nitrogen fertilizer their agronomist suggested mid-season to boost yield potential will pay off.

"Most operators understand if an enterprise is generally profitable, but when margins are tight, having that more detailed view of the overall operation helps them determine likely level of risk versus reward when it comes to spending money to make money."

Regular reviews and adjustments

Income and expenses are typically reviewed on a quarterly basis, according to Tippe, "and that cadence fits in nicely with tax reporting and regulatory cycles."

But when cash flow or margins are tight or variable, users may wish to switch to a monthly review to identify opportunities and adjust plans, if necessary.

"This kind of detailed data is also an important tool when it comes to budget planning and cash-flow forecasting," he said. "Planning is an important annual process, but it's rarely a once-and-done process."

Reviewing plans before seasonal activities, like planting or harvest, allows for tweaks if necessary.

Plans should also be reviewed any time major changes occur, such as environmental impacts, regulatory changes and market fluctuations, either on inputs or commodity sales, Tippe advises.

The Miner Report

PARILOV/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

A new study that followed 3,500 cows showed that rumination time, especially around first calving, reflects a cow's underlying resilience and long-term performance.

Cows that chew well do well

Rumination time matters more than you think

Heather Dann
William H. Miner
Agricultural Research Institute

Rumination is a fundamental cow behaviour with wide-ranging implications for digestion, health and productivity. Rechewing feed increases saliva flow, helps maintain rumen pH and supports fibre degradation. When rumination declines, feed intake and rumen health often suffer soon after.

Because rumination responds quickly to changes in a cow's status, it often declines before milk yield drops or visible signs of illness appear. That is why rumination has become a valuable management tool on dairies today.

A signal of other things

At the Miner Institute we've been monitoring rumination in our lactating herd since 2012 using a collar- based system. We rely on this information to detect cows in heat, identify sick cows earlier, manage transition challenges and evaluate the effectiveness of our heat-stress control strategies.

Like many farms, we initially viewed rumination primarily as a short-term alert system. New research suggests it may be much more than that.

A recent study published in the *Journal of Dairy Science* makes a strong case that rumination time, especially around first calving, reflects a cow's underlying resilience and long-term performance. The researchers followed more than 3,500 Holstein heifers using accelerometer-based collars from 60 days before to 60 days after calving. They found that cows with higher rumination times tended to produce more milk, return to breeding sooner and experience fewer health problems.

Stress detector

The first transition into lactation is a major test for heifers. Nutrient demands increase rapidly, housing and social environments change and management routines shift. Not all heifers respond to these stressors in the same way. This difference is especially apparent in rumination patterns around calving. Some heifers show a sharp decline in rumination, while others maintain a steadier pattern. The magnitude of the drop reflects how strongly a cow responds to stress, and the speed of recovery reflects how quickly she returns to normal function.

In other words, rumination provides a window into resilience.

One of the most interesting findings from the study is that rumination time is heritable, meaning it is a trait that is explained by genetic, rather than environmental factors.

The highest heritability occurred during the last month before calving. This suggests that cows differ consistently in their ability to maintain rumination when challenged.

In contrast, rumination time during the first two weeks after calving showed low heritability, likely because environmental and management factors play a larger role immediately after calving.

This research helped put words and numbers to something we have noticed at our farm for years. Even when cows are fed the same diet and managed similarly, rumination times vary among individual cows. Some cows are simply better ruminators than others. The new findings suggest that these differences are not random and may reflect inherent biological traits rather than just day-to-day management effects.

Can it help improve genetics?

The researchers also asked an important practical question: Can rumination time be used not only for daily cow management but also as a trait for genetic improvement, especially in first-calving heifers?

From a management standpoint, this means we should look beyond single alerts and focus on trends over time, compare cows at the same stage of lactation, and pay close attention to heifers with consistently low rumination before and after calving.

Ultimately, this study reinforces that rumination is not just a short-term signal. It reflects a cow's biology and her ability to cope with stress. Because rumination is heritable and favourably associated with milk production, fertility and health, it may play a role in future breeding goals aimed at improving resilience.

This research supports what many farmers and our herdsmen at Miner already know: Cows that chew well do well.

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

Cookin' with the Advocate

Raspberry Mousse

CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

This raspberry mousse cake can be make simply by using an Angel cake. The fancy part is the mousse.

Ingredients

150 ml (5 ounces) whole milk
5 egg yolks
100g (3½ ounces) sugar
1 envelope of gelatin (follow instructions on packet)
250 ml (1 cup) whipping cream, whipped
125 ml (½ cup) raspberry jam (if very sweet adjust sugar above)

Preparation

Put the milk in a heavy-bottom saucepan and bring to a boil.

In a bowl, beat the egg yolks with the sugar until the mixture is thick. (I used the KitchenAid.)

Add a little of the boiling milk, stirring constantly. Return to the remaining milk in the pan and cook, stirring, until the custard thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon.

Stir in the gelatin and the raspberry jam. Cool. Then, stir in the whipped whipping cream.

Spread between cake layers, leaving about two-thirds for the top and sides. You may also divide it between individual small dessert dishes, chill and serve on its own, topped with fresh berries.

Adapted from: Le Cordon Bleu Classic French Cookbook, *The Centenary Collection, 1994*

The perfect cake for summertime

But making it is harder than it looks

Cynthia Gunn
QFA's Food Writer

There is a reason why desserts made by pastry chefs look too perfect to eat – those perfectly even light layers of cake spread with just the right amount of filling, edges perfectly rounded, tops of cake as flat as an ice rink, where they're meant to be. It takes nine months and $33,925 to graduate from Ottawa's Cordon Bleu pastry chef course.

On the other hand, there is most of us, who learn to bake a little more haphazardly. Perhaps as a child under the tutelage of a parent or grandparent, perhaps through trial and error later in life, with the mistakes and frustrations that come with that path.

Even after years of baking, I am reminded, often in May, when I am requested to make a birthday cake, that I am an amateur. That's OK, and my intended audience is not overly demanding or critical if it doesn't turn out as well as I hoped. The willingness to try to fulfill the request has always been most appreciated, and so most years a new cake venture ensues.

This year, I made the suggestion for the birthday cake, knowing that white chocolate and raspberry were top of list. Not that I had a recipe for a white chocolate and raspberry dessert. As with many past birthdays, I was going to make it up, to a certain extent, by mixing and matching recipes, tweaking them where necessary. I had in mind a white chocolate cake with raspberry mousse. I settled on recipes from *Le Cordon Bleu Classic French Cookbook*. Here's how it went.

First, the mousse. The better news first.

I've made various mousses before, particularly chocolate mousse for one of my favourite special-occasion cakes: Chocolate cake with espresso butter cream layered with chocolate mousse. The mousse recipe I took from this book so it seemed a promising choice. The recipe I found that looked the most tweakable was a passionfruit mousse, part of a dessert called Miroir Passion, "an exotic light dessert that combines classic French pastry techniques with a modern tropical favourite – passionfruit."

OK, I could substitute old-fashioned North American raspberry, this could work. And that part did.

In place of the passionfruit pulp and jam I just used some raspberry jam. They always call for leaves of gelatin. I never am sure what these are or how much they gel, so I just used one pack of Knox gelatin.

"The classic French technique" perhaps should have given me pause. I wanted a cake that was not rich, as a counterpoint to the mousse. The Genoese sponge, therefore, appealed because it contains no butter, just eggs, sugar and flour. Deceptively simple. Except it wasn't.

You were supposed to whisk the beaten eggs and sugar in a bowl and then place over simmering water until "thick and leaves a ribbon trail when the whisk is lifted." I thought I did just that. I then added the flour and chopped white chocolate. All was good. I was meant to pipe the mixture into 9-inch round pans. Why can't you just spread it with a spatula? I wasn't about use a pipe bag. Ah, it stuck to everything I discovered, and the batter refused to be spread out.

When baked, the top stayed all lumpy. No matter, I thought, it may still taste good, and I can cover up my mistakes with thick layers of mousse.

Well, the cake didn't quite work. Clearly, my technique was not up to snuff. The white chocolate bits tasted good, but the cake was dense, not light and airy. So I am not going to include that recipe here, but encourage you to use a recipe you may already have for a light white cake.

I thought an Angel cake might work, as long as the sweetness was adjusted, as the mousse is quite sweet. For the white chocolate decoration, melt some white chocolate and drizzle it over some parchment paper or tinfoil. When cool, cut or break it into pieces as desired.

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

The Classifieds

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