

Quebec Farmers' Advocate



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**"Succession isn't
about older farmers
disappearing. It's about
creating space for the
next generation to
make decisions, learn
from mistakes and
build confidence while
experienced mentors
remain close enough
to guide them."**

— Heather Watson,
Executive Director,
Farm Management Canada

QFA VIDEOCONFERENCES

**Wednesday, Sept. 30
at 2 p.m.**

**Beneath the Sod:
Rebuilding Soil on
700 Acres**

**Wednesday, Oct. 21
at 7:30 p.m.**

**Beekeeping, Family
and Highland Cattle**

See page 12 and 13 for details.

FARMING IN GASPÉ



BRENDA O'FARRELL, THE ADVOCATE

Farmers have always had a natural attachment to the land. But nowhere is this attachment quite like the one farmers have to the rolling fields along the Gaspé coast – one of the most picturesque parts of Quebec. It has forged a farming community like no other. **Read the story on Pages 4 and 5.**

Quebec election Party leaders focus on farming, food

Frederic Serre
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

Weeks into the 2026 provincial election campaign, the leaders of Quebec's three major parties are turning their attention to farmers and agri-producers, with promises that their election programs will be a driving force in the economic development of all regions of the province.

The leader of the Liberal Party of Quebec, Charles Milliard, was in Brownsburg-Chatham on Sept. 6 to present his party's agricultural platform. He says the Liberals want to give producers the means to invest, grow their businesses, ensure succession and create more markets for local products.

Milliard said his government would redistribute \$560 million over four years to Quebec's farmers and that his party would "take action across the entire supply chain, from farm to table."

"We want to take care of those who feed Quebec by ensuring the long-term stability of farm workers and addressing food insecurity through the roll-out of food vouchers, which will both increase the food purchasing power of people in vulnerable situations and create new opportunities for local producers," Milliard said.

"We will modernize financing tools, facilitate the transfer of farms to the next generation, and better tailor programs to regional realities," he added. "We will also strengthen short supply chains and local food systems so that more of what is produced in Quebec can be processed, sold and consumed here."

The distribution of \$560 million to farmers would be carried out through a special green fund, which would be used to support production, investment and the development of farming businesses.

See ELECTION, Page 21.

Farmers need to brace as trade war rages

Andrew McClelland
The Advocate
– Local Journalism Initiative

Canadian farmers need to brace for rising equipment and input costs and tighter margins in the months ahead, now that trade negotiations between Canada and the United States have broken down, says a panel of trade and agriculture experts.

"We've looked closely at the direct impacts of the (Section) 338 tariffs here at FCC, and of the \$28 billion in Canadian agri-food exports that are exposed, we're seeing about \$3.5 billion directly impacted," said Craig Johnston, vice-president and chief economist at Farm Credit Canada.

"Alcohol is the number one hit. We're talking about \$1.3 billion in export dollars being sent annually to the United States."

That was one of the takeaways from a webinar hosted late last month by the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI) convened shortly after Canada suspended trade negotiations with the U.S.

The panel – titled "The tariffs are here: What does it mean for Canada's agri-food sector?" – brought together trade veterans, economists and industry leaders to unpack what the breakdown means for Canadian agriculture heading into the fall.

Johnston told moderator CAPI's managing director Tyler McCann that the direct hit to agri-food exports doesn't tell the whole story.

See TRADE, Page 7.



Just the facts

9th

Canada is the world's ninth largest exporter of agri-food products, exporting approximately \$100 billion worth annually, with wheat and processed grain products alone accounting for almost \$22 billion.

Source: Canada The National Food Security Strategy, June 2026

11th

While Canada is the world's ninth largest exporter of agri-food products, it is also the world's 11th largest importer of agricultural products and agri-food.

Source: Canada The National Food Security Strategy, June 2026

30%

That is the drop in the number of farm managers in Canada by 2030, according to the Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council, as wave of farmers are set to retire or leave the industry.

Source: CAHRC

80.28%

That is the percentage of Quebec farm operators who have submitted a declaration of revenues to the Union des producteurs agricoles, a figure that will determine the level of dues that will be charged in annual dues beginning in 2027.

Source: UPA

75

That is the number of years since 1951. It has been that long since the number of cows in the U.S. beef herd has been as low as it is now. In that same period, the population of the U.S. has increased by 121 per cent, soaring from 154.9 million in mid-1951 to 341.8 million, according to the last census.

Sources: The Atlantic and U.S. Census Bureau

PICKING STONES



THE ADVOCATE

The art, if we can call it that, of picking stones in a field is very different from the art of collecting stones by the waterfront. What you do with them is different, too. These stones collected along the coast along the Gaspé coast's north shore were carefully placed along a large driftwood log. Passers-by add to the collection.



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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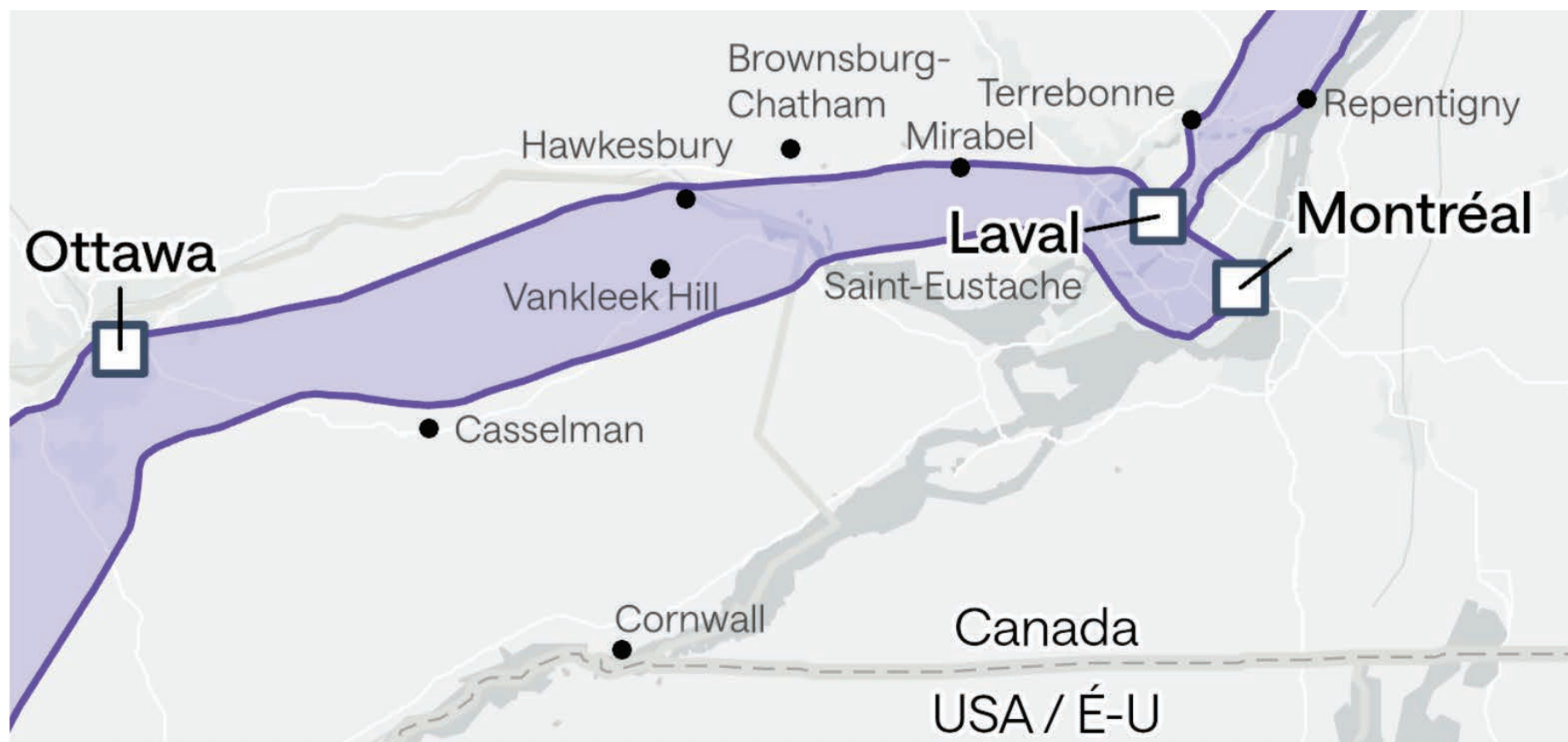
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COURTESY ALTO

The shaded area on the map shows the general path of the proposed rail line. The exact footprint of the tracks will only be known in the fall.

Large farmer protest planned later this month in Rigaud

Land owners from across Quebec, eastern Ontario oppose high-speed train

Brenda O'Farrell

The Advocate

– Local Journalism Initiative

About 1,000 protesters and 500 tractors are expected to converge in Rigaud on Sept. 19 as farmers from across Quebec and eastern Ontario step up their efforts to urge the federal government to halt its plans for the proposed Alto high-speed train from Quebec City to Toronto, claiming it would have devastating impacts on some of eastern Canada's best farmland.

"It's not a rail line they're building, it's a Berlin Wall with fences on either side," said dairy farmer Daniel Legault in an interview with *The Advocate*.

Legault's farm stretches across 1,200 acres that straddle the Quebec-Ontario border. Although he lives in Rigaud, where his 200-head dairy operation is located, he farms fields located in Pointe Fortune, Ste. Marthe and Très St. Rédempteur in the Vaudreuil-Soulanges area and East Hawkesbury, Ont.

He will be hosting the Sept. 19

protest because the border location of his farm symbolizes the unity between farmers in Quebec and Ontario who oppose the rail line, he said.

"We're united against this project," Legault said defiantly, adding the 500 tractors farmers will assemble on his farm will represent the number of farms that will be affected by the train line between Montreal and Ottawa.

Farmers from across Vaudreuil-Soulanges, the Mirabel region, eastern Ontario and as far as Kingston, Ont., are expected to attend, he said.

In early May, Martin Imbleau, the president and CEO of Alto, the authority in charge of the development and implementation of the rail line, said the track would cross about 1,700 properties in the 200-kilometre stretch between Montreal and Ottawa, running north of the island of Montreal into Ontario.

Though no precise route for the rail line has been confirmed, a map obtained from Alto of the general trajectory of the line indicates that it could cut across a corner of Pointe

Fortune and western Rigaud. If it cuts through this area of Vaudreuil-Soulanges, it could run through Legault's land and about four other farms in the region.

The UPA has voiced its resounding opposition to the project, standing firm with farmers from the four regions the rail line is projected to carve its way through as it is extended to Quebec City – the Capitale-Nationale-Côte-Nord region, in the Quebec City area; the Mauricie region, between Quebec City and Montreal; the Lanaudière area, north of Montreal; and Outaouais-Laurentides, northwest of Montreal to the Ontario border.

With the high-speed trains expected to travel up to 300 kilometres per hour, the new track will be fenced off to ensure safety. Farmers say this feature will make accessing areas of farms where it will cut through very difficult. If Legault's farm ends up in the train corridor, it would mean he would have to make huge detours with his farm equipment, and roads could be closed off.

But it's not just farmers who will be affected, say municipal leaders in Rigaud and Pointe Fortune. The train line could impact many aspects of rural life in small towns, disrupting school bus routes, ambulance access and the continuity of road networks. They plan to host an information evening on Sept. 17 in Rigaud to explain the impact the train line could have on small communities along its route.

The proposed high-speed rail line will stretch 1,000 kilometres between Toronto and Quebec City, with stations in Ottawa, Laval and Montreal.

The train will run on electrified tracks, and is predicted to be able to travel between Ottawa and Montreal in one hour and Toronto and Quebec City in three hours. The project is estimated to cost between \$60 billion and \$90 billion, Alto said.

Alto is expected to announce the precise route for the rail line this fall. Construction on the first leg of the line – between Ottawa and Montreal – is expected to break ground by 2029.

News



ALL PHOTOS BRENDA O'FARRELL, THE ADVOCATE

Paul Hayes checks on some of his beef cattle in a field that is part of his farm in Port Daniel-Gascons, just east of Shigawake.

Farming in Gaspé

The place defines those who choose to farm

Brenda O'Farrell

The Advocate

– Local Journalism Initiative

Farming has never been described as an easy pursuit. It is a career that comes with a variety of challenges. Some might even argue the challenges are all part of its appeal.

That might explain why some people choose to do it.

When it comes to where you farm, the reasons often have to do with history. Many of today's agricultural producers farm the land their parents and grandparents worked. That sense of legacy is all part of the package.

But nowhere does the where and the why of farming define the people who do it more than along the Gaspé coast, one of the most picturesque parts of Quebec, where the geography – both its shape and location – has forged a farming community like no other.



In all, there are 241 agricultural producers in this remote, corner of Quebec, according to figures recorded in 2023, the latest statistics available.

And from all appearances, they are a tight-knit group despite being spread across a vast area that stretches over more than 31,000 square kilometres – a territory that is slightly larger than the country of Belgium.

But the real scale of the agricultural activity in this region reveals itself in the subsets of the farming community.

Take dairy, for instance. There are only 11 dairy producers along “the Gaspé coast,” as the locals refer to the region. That number jumps to 12 if you include the one in nearby Îles de la Madeleine.

Beef producers make up the biggest group, followed closely by vegetable-growers and maple syrup producers.

The number of farmers has dropped since 2013, when there were 265 registered farms, according to the Gaspésie-Île de la Madeleine federation of the Union des producteurs agricoles. That is a loss of 24.

But that number does not tell the whole story. There has been a small uptick in the numbers – but the emphasis has to be put on the term “small.”

Between the beginning of 2022 and the end of February 2023, 20 new farming operations have launched in the region,

according to the UPA federation. But in that same period, established operations have closed, leaving the net difference at plus 7.

The region also has seen a steady drop in population between 2001 and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, accounting for an almost 10-per-cent decrease in the number of residents. That stands in sharp contrast to the province overall, which has seen its population jump by about 1.2 million in the same time period.

But since the pandemic, there has been a slight retracing of the population loss in Gaspé. Between 2020 and 2024, the population grew by 2.75 per cent, according to figures from the Institut de la statistique du Québec.



It is within this backdrop of a slowly shrinking population and a dwindling number of farms that you find a subset of the Gaspé region that seems to generate its own brand of vibrancy – the English-speaking farming community.

There are no official statistics that quantify this group. So the question was put to a few members of the community:

How many English-speaking farmers are there in the region? The response comes back by way of a reaction: They all start naming names and counting them off on their fingers.

The best estimate is “about 15.”



A different style of farm

Mike Brash and his partner Julie Lamoureux operate a farm in New Richmond where they grow lavender and vegetables.

“I am not a farmer,” said Brash as he toured a group of visitors around his farm earlier this month. “I’m a beginner baby farmer.”

Brash left his life in Montreal where he ran his own company to return to Gaspé to try his hand at growing lavender on land that has been in his family for seven generations.

He admits he is learning as he goes, which in the last few years has meant expanding his lavender fields and processing operation where he bottles the popular oil and its derivatives.

Lamoureux markets the output and runs a small shop on the site, which also sells the growing list of vegetables the



Joshua Hayes wraps cut oats and peas that have just been harvested.



Mike Brash explains how he dries the lavender he has harvested.

farm now offers – everything from carrots to potatoes and tomatoes to squash.



One of the few dairy operations

Gary Hayes and his daughter Jennifer operate a dairy farm in Shigawake, one of the 11 dairy farms in the region.

They farm roughly 1,000 acres, milk 50 to 55 cows and have a 35-head beef cattle herd.

At the age of 80, Gary works every day.

"I'm busier than I want to be," he said.

The farm has ebbed and flowed over the years, adding a variety of niche operations to its roster of activities.

"We've been opportunity driven here," said Jennifer, explaining how keeping the business successful has meant being open to diversifying.

The niche offerings the Hayes family has developed include a farm machinery and hardware store that stocks "just about any part or strap" that any piece of farm machinery would need. In a region where a parts store and machinery dealers can be hundreds of kilometres away, farmers in the region appreciate this style of entrepreneurship.

The Hayes farm has also established a seafood compost processing plant. It converts waste from nearby fish processing plants into rich black compost.

Although the Hayes farm innovates,

there is hardly any new technology being used. Without having the needed support required to maintain anything hi-tech in the region, farms have to focus on machines they can repair themselves, Jennifer explained.



A tradition continues

Just down the road from Shigawake in Port Daniel-Gascons, Paul Hayes and his son, Joshua, operate a beef farm, which also has a few sheep. This Hayes clan are distant cousins to Gary Hayes' branch of the family.

They have 100 head they pasture in six locations. In all, they farm on 900 acres, part they own. The rest they rent.

It is a patchwork of fields, Paul Hayes explained, "The biggest field is 20 acres."

He decided he wanted to start farming when he was 13. And he has done it all his life.

Would he do it all over again if he had the chance?

He stand silent for a while, as he mulls the question put to him. "I guess I would. Yup," he said as a smile slips into his face.

He raised his family, which includes a son and a daughter, on his farm. The family now counts five grandchildren. He says he is encouraged that his son "is coming up behind me" to take over the farm.



Gary Hayes (CENTRE) stands in his well stocked parts store on the second floor of a building on his farm.



THE ADVOCATE

Dairy farmer Gary Hayes stands by the sign he put up at the edge of his field in Shigawake along the Gaspé coast where the train track passes. He put it up back when VIA still ran passengers trains that far east.



John McCart
QFA President

Farming in Gaspé has its unique charm and challenges

The Quebec Farmers' Association was invited by the producers in the Gaspé region to visit their corner of the province. So during the first week of September, I made the trip.

The coastal region, although large in size, only has about 300 farms, of which 15 are operated by English-speaking producers. Although small, the farming community there is vibrant.

Getting to this region was an adventure in itself. Almost 1,000 kilometres away, I saw a lot of the Quebec countryside, including a little bit of New Brunswick, en route to the Town of New Richmond in the Bonaventure area along the Baie des Chaleurs, where a large number of farms are located. There are numerous other regions that have agriculture as well, like Matapédia, Upper Gaspé, Côte de Gaspé and les Îles de la Madeleine.

The agricultural community in these parts is tightly knit, and it quickly becomes apparent that everybody knows everybody else.

The first stop on the tour was the regional UPA office in New Richmond. Then, it was off to an organic vegetable and lavender farm, Purple Fields Farms, run by owners Mike Brash and Julie Lamoureux, who returned to the farm that had been in Mike's family for generations.

Previously a horse and hay farm, they have been slowly transforming it into the farm they have today, selling fresh produce, lavender products and creating a beautiful place for others to enjoy nature.

For lunch, we met with members of the local MAPAQ office and talked all things farming. We then followed dairy farmer Jennifer Hayes up the coast to Shigawake to visit her family farm.

The Hayes family has farmed here for more than 200 years. Jennifer and her father Gary explained how they

have continually adapted, improvised and diversified their farm. Along with the dairy herd, they have beef cattle, a small grain production, a large woodlot and even process and sell fish compost.

The next stop was at a beef farm owned by Paul Hayes and his son Joshua, distant cousins to Jennifer and Gary.

They run a cow-calf operation with about 100 pairs, while also raising sheep. Hay is of the utmost importance. With the abundant rain this year, they are building up a good reserve. It is in contrast to last year, when dry conditions mean they had to purchase hay. Droughts are becoming too frequent in this area as elsewhere in Quebec and preparedness is a key.

The day ended with a wonderful meal at the Shigawake fairgrounds where more agriculture was talked about. In the area, the community is a very important aspect of rural life. The Shigawake Agricultural Society has a very long history and we could see

how the annual fair and music festival is very important.

The next day, my wife Darlene and I continued up the coast towards Percé. It was our first time in the area and we wanted to see the natural beauty that so many visit and rave about. We then made our way to the north side of the peninsula, to continue along the coastal road from L'Anse Pleureuse to Rimouski. Driving in these areas we could see that along with farming, tourism, forestry and fishing are the lifeblood of the area.

For those of us who farm in southern Quebec, we sometimes take it for granted how close everything is. We are never more than an hour away from big city services, half an hour away from simple things like machinery dealerships.

As we all experience the difficulties of these modern times, I realize every region and every community is needed to show the world the strength of Quebec and Canada.

Pressing politicians on behalf of young farmers

New FRAQ leader weighs into election campaign

Andrew McClelland

The Advocate

– Local Journalism Initiative

Carianne Lemire has been named interim president of the Fédération de la relève agricole du Québec (FRAQ), the UPA specialized federation advocating for the rights of the next generation of agricultural producers, stepping in after David Beauvais resigned from the role in August.

Lemire, a longtime member of the federation, will oversee the organization's ongoing files and continue its work until FRAQ's next annual meeting, scheduled for March 2027.

She takes over at a pivotal moment: with Quebec's provincial election approaching, FRAQ recently published a 26-point platform outlining what it

wants from the next government to improve conditions for young people establishing themselves in agriculture.

"During the (Coalition Avenir Québec) leadership race, Christine Fréchette made several promises to farmers that she kept. Now, we'd like to see commitments like that made every year," said Lemire in an interview with French-language weekly *La Terre de chez nous*.

Among the federation's demands: abolishing the welcome tax on transactions involving agricultural trusts and loans granted through the *Fonds d'investissement pour la relève agricole* (FIRA), raising the province's total agricultural budget envelope from 1 per cent to 2 per cent, and creating a fund specifically for young farmers entering the sector.

The FRAQ's 26-point platform comes as farm groups increasingly look to make agriculture a ballot-box issue ahead of the Oct. 5 election. Lemire's comments suggest FRAQ wants that attention to outlast the campaign itself – pointing to Fréchette's promises during the CAQ leadership race as an example of the kind of commitment the federation hopes becomes a standing practice for whichever party forms government.

In a statement, FRAQ's board of directors thanked Beauvais for his contribution to the organization and for amplifying the concerns of young agricultural entrepreneurs across Quebec.

Beauvais, a sheep and dairy producer from Magog, led FRAQ for three years, elected at the age of 32.

"We sincerely thank David for all his contributions to the federation," the

statement read. "We are also pleased to be able to count on Carianne to ensure this transition and maintain the momentum of our actions for the benefit of the next generation of farmers," the board said.

The FRAQ did not respond to requests from *The Advocate* for comment, but in a Facebook post Lemire said Beauvais stepped down because he was struggling to balance the presidency with his own farm operation and a second job needed to make ends meet – an example of the challenges young producers face in Quebec, which the FRAQ tries to assist with.

To view the FRAQ's advocacy platform, visit its dedicated English-language website at <https://fraq.quebec/advocacy-platform>

TRADE: With three-quarters of agri-food products going to U.S., Canada faces 'huge vulnerability'

From Page 1

Beyond alcohol, the sectors most exposed include flowers and bulbs, protein isolates, dairy and honey – though maple syrup has so far been spared. And the figure of \$3.5-billion of agri-food exports that will be affected, he says, captures only the direct impact of the tariffs themselves, not the indirect fallout from Canada's retaliatory measures or the cost of federal support programs triggered in response.

The bigger structural problem, Johnston said, is that Canada sends roughly three-quarters of its agri-food products to the United States – a level of exposure he called a "huge vulnerability."

FCC has identified what it considers a \$12-billion "low-hanging-fruit" opportunity to diversify agri-food exports toward markets where Canada already has free-trade agreements in place, along with modest gains available through more interprovincial trade.

Supply management under pressure

Surprisingly, dairy emerged as a quieter flashpoint. Al Mussell, a senior research fellow at CAPI, noted that changes the U.S. had been pushing for to how Canada administers its dairy tariff-rate quotas (TRQs) would have been costly

for Canadian processors, even though the issue drew far less media attention than supply management generally.

Mussell explained Canada's dairy TRQs are already fully subscribed, so the fight was really over which products fill them. U.S. negotiators, he said, wanted more room to export higher-value dairy products into Canada, which risked squeezing premium Canadian products out of retail shelf space – a loss that would ripple back to farms, since raw milk is allocated to processing plants on a use-it-or-lose-it basis.

Mussell also pointed to a deeper concern: that the U.S. administration appeared willing to bypass the dispute-resolution mechanism built into the Canada–United States–Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) in favour of tariff threats.

"I don't know how you negotiate a durable arrangement with somebody who's prepared to do that," he said.

Spirits down the drain

Cal Bricker, president and CEO of the distillers' advocacy group Spirits Canada, said his industry has had a "pretty fraught" year. Canada produces about \$2 billion worth of spirits annually, and \$1 billion of that – 93 per cent

of exports – goes to the United States.

Bricker also cautioned that targeting individual products for retaliation can backfire, since global spirits companies often own brands on both sides of the border. He used Makers Mark, a Kentucky bourbon brand owned by a company that also owns Canadian Club, as an example: "If you're retaliating against Makers Mark, who are you actually retaliating against? Yourself."

What can farmers do now?

Asked what advice she would give Canadian farmers, ranchers and wine makers trying to get through the uncertainty, Lisa Raitt – a member of the federal Advisory Committee on Canada–U.S. Economic Relations and vice-chair at CIBC – offered two suggestions. First, producers with contacts south of the border should encourage them to tell their members of Congress how important Canada is to the U.S. economy, since a faster resolution serves both countries better than a prolonged standoff.

Second, she urged producers to talk to their lenders early.

"Talk to your lender. Talk to Farm Credit Canada. Or, if it's your bank, talk to your account manager," Raitt said.

"Figure out what's going on. There's programming available from the Canadian government that may be of help."

With Section 338 tariffs still in place and negotiations stalled, the panelists agreed the near-term outlook depends less on when talks resume and more on how quickly Canadian producers and processors can diversify away from their reliance on the U.S. market.

During the webinar, an audience poll was taken that revealed 49 per cent of attendees identified rising equipment and input costs – and the tighter margins that come with them – as the impact they're most worried about, ahead of reduced sales, falling prices or reduced investment.

Shaun Haney, founder and owner of RealAgriculture, a Canadian agricultural media and digital publishing company, said the result wasn't surprising.

"Tariffs are a tax on the person paying, and that is a concern for farmers," he said.

To watch the full panel discussion, go to YouTube and search "CAPI The tariffs are here" or visit the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute's YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/@capi-icpa

Trends in agriculture



Chris Judd
The Advocate

Acceptance and being satisfied keys to happiness

If only everyone could learn to embrace both in all aspects of life

Life-altering experiences can be quite difficult to accept.

Twenty-two years ago this November, I had a stroke while sitting in my doctor's office waiting for a regular checkup. I had just driven home the night before after lobbying the Quebec government for some badly needed help for our farmers after "mad-cow disease" had devastated the world market with a decline in beef consumption. Canadian consumers had understood that there was no danger of contaminated meat getting onto our store shelves. They stood behind Canadian farmers, and beef consumption in Canada didn't decrease like it did in most other countries. However, the prices received by our farmers dropped drastically.

One neighbour who had shipped a large healthy cow to market received a cheque for 37 cents for the animal after trucking and sales barn fees were deducted. It should have brought \$2,000. He never cashed that cheque. He just pinned it to the wall as a reminder of how bad farming can get.

As for me, I was very lucky that I had my stroke in my doctor's office. After being transported to the hospital only a half-mile away in minutes, I was extremely lucky that the doctors decided not to give me a new clot-busting drug to dissolve a clot that may have been causing the stroke. An MRI later showed that the stroke was caused by a "bleed" and not a blood clot. That new clot-busting drug would have killed me.

Being grateful

When I came to in the ER, I was very happy that my right side was still as good as it was before. I could still talk, hear and see. I also still had some feeling on my left side. I immediately accepted that I was still living, had a great doctor and was still a good "half man." With some paralysis on my left side, my life would be different. There were some things I could not do any more. But I had taught my family and employees how to perform all the tasks I was responsible for.

After waiting a very long time, my wife Jeannie recently had a knee replacement. She didn't think it would change her life. Recovery has been difficult.



NICK P. JOHNSON/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Less is sometimes more: A well kept little "raised bed" is more impressive than an acre of garden full of weeds.

Every movement hurts. Getting out of bed is a real procedure. Using a walker is an experience she didn't expect. She has never been so restricted in what she can do. The pain is slowly dissipating every day, and movement is slowly becoming easier. Total acceptance is not quite here yet, though.

Better is not always bigger

Quite a few years ago, our best respected neighbour bought a new tractor, one of the most powerful in the area. I congratulated him on his well deserved new, larger tractor. I will never forget his reply.

"It don't matter how big the tractor is, if no one sits on the seat, the tractor will do nothing" he said.

I then realized that an old reliable tractor working in the field is better than a new one with a mixed-up computer. With today's computerized machinery,

that statement has even more meaning.

Knowing why is important

Having a good work ethic is an asset.

Many years ago, my father – who has been gone almost 60 years – told me: "Whether you place first or last in a class at the fair, doesn't mater as much as whether you learned why."

It is truly heartwarming to watch a judge of the 4-H classes explain to each show person why they were placed as they were – the best and worst part of the animal you are showing. Learning is a never-ending part of our lives whatever we do.

Whether we live in a multi-million-dollar home or a rented house-trailer isn't nearly as important as it is to cut the lawn and keep everything neat and tidy. Whether we drive a new Cadillac or an old half-ton, if it's clean and polished, it is more impressive.

A well kept little "raised bed" is more impressive than an acre of garden full of weeds.

Same principle apply on a global scale

The leaders of a country should be more interested in keeping their own citizens fed and healthy than trying to intimidate other countries and invading or taking over their neighbours. A country's natural resources are a saviour in tough times to keep its citizens free, fed, housed and healthy.

Too often we are too quick to criticize and don't appreciate the good we have. Trying to make everyone else do exactly what we want them to is something that we might not want them to do to us!

Acceptance of the good we have and being satisfied with what we have make for a much more enjoyable life.

Canadian apple growers unite under new national banner

Andrew McClelland

The Advocate

– Local Journalism Initiative

Canada's apple-growing industry has a new name – and a new ambition. Grower organizations from British Columbia, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia unanimously agreed this summer to launch Apples Canada/Pommes Canada, a national collaborative body that will coordinate research, promotion and policy advocacy across the country's five apple-producing provinces.

The announcement was made at the Apple Working Group's mid-summer meeting of the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) in Moncton, N.B. Apples Canada operates under FVGC alongside similar sector bodies, including the Canadian Potato Council and the Greenhouse Produce Alliance of Canada.

Despite the timing – amid a period of heightened Canada-U.S. trade tensions and a growing “buy Canadian” mood among consumers – Apples Canada staff says the launch is not a response to current events.

“The creation of Apples Canada should be viewed as an organizational evolution rather than a response to any specific trade dispute,” said Jérôme-Antoine Brunelle, general manager of *Les producteurs de pommes du Québec*. The new body is simply a rebranding of the Apple Working Group, which has operated for years within FVGC.

“The objective was to adopt a clearer and more recognizable identity that better reflects how provincial apple grower organizations collaborate on issues of common interest,” said Brunelle in an interview with *The Advocate*.

Brunelle is clear that Apples Canada is not a marketing board and carries no regulatory authority. Provincial bodies like *Les producteurs de pommes du Québec* retain full responsibility for representing growers within their own jurisdictions. The national body's roll is to coordinate where working together adds value: jointly purchasing market intelligence, sharing analysis of pricing trends, aligning research priorities and developing collective applications to federal programs such as AgriMarketing and AgriScience.

“Through this collaboration, provincial organizations can leverage resources more effectively and speak with a stronger, unified voice on issues of national importance,” Brunelle said.

Kelly Ciceran, general manager of Ontario Apple Growers (OAG), put it more simply:

“We want to reduce duplication across provinces by understanding what other provinces are doing,” Ciceran said. “We share many common issues, and we hope we can tackle them together where possible.”

Ontario's more than 200 apple growers now have two appointees plus the provincial executive director sitting on Apples Canada – a model replicated across



SWOLF1425/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Canada's 2026 apple crop is estimated at 18.9 million bushels, in line with historical averages. Gala, Honeycrisp, Ambrosia and McIntosh remain the country's four leading varieties.

the member provinces. Charles Stevens serves as the organization's inaugural chair.

The 2026 Canadian apple crop, also announced at the Moncton meeting, is estimated at 18.9 million bushels – slightly below last year but in line with historical averages. Gala, Honeycrisp, Ambrosia and McIntosh remain the four leading varieties grown nationally.

For Stevens, the stakes go beyond logistics.

“Consumers value local food, and Canadian apples are an important part of that connection,” he said. “Making locally grown apples accessible across Canada is a responsibility shared by everyone involved in bringing food from our orchards to consumers' tables.”

English-language farm succession event in Brome-Missisquoi

Andrew McClelland

The Advocate

– Local Journalism Initiative

Passing a farm to the next generation is one of the most complex – and emotionally loaded – transitions a farm family can navigate. A free half-day conference offered in English in Brome-Missisquoi next month aims to make that process a little less daunting.

On Oct. 28, the *Conseil de l'industrie bioalimentaire de l'Estrie* (CIBLE) and the Brome-Missisquoi regional county municipality (MRC) are hosting a conference and networking morning at the Brome County Agricultural Society, bringing together financial planners, agroeconomists, farm succession specialists and mental health resources under one roof.

The morning will open with two guest speakers: Karine Vasseur, a financial planner, and Mélanie Latulippe,

AT A GLANCE

- **Conference on Farm Business Transfer – Brome-Missisquoi**
- **Date:** Wednesday, Oct. 28, 2026
- **Time:** 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- **Location:** Brome County Agricultural Society, 345 chemin Stagecoach, Brome, QC J0E 1K0
- **Cost:** Free – registration required
- **Language:** English; bilingual staff on site
- **Register:** zeffy.com/fr-CA/ticketing/conference-and-networking-on-farm-business-transfer-brome-missisquoi
- **For more info:** Corinne Bolduc, CIBLE – transfertagricole@cible-estrie.org – 819-346-8905, ext. 5144

an agroeconomist. Vasseur was a guest speaker of a videoconference hosted by the Quebec Farmers' Association last December.

Their presentations will walk attendees through the stages and legal implications of a farm business transfer, how to assess the economic transferability of a farm operation, and how to plan a household budget for life after farming

– a step that trips up many retiring producers who have long drawn their income and housing from the same property.

Advisory booths will also give attendees the chance to speak one-on-one with representatives from L'ARTERRE, the Eastern Townships' farm matchmaking service that pairs retiring producers with potential successors from

outside the family; the *Association des conseillers en financement agricole* (ACFA); *La Financière agricole du Québec*; and the Brome-Missisquoi MRC's own economic development team.

The program includes a dedicated section on mental health and support services – an acknowledgement that succession planning carries a hefty personal weight. The decision to hand over a business that may have been in a family for generations is rarely a purely financial calculation.

The event is in English, with bilingual staff on site. It is free and open to all, but registration is required.

To register:

1. Go to cibleestrie.ca/transfert-agricole.
2. Click on “Transfert Agricole” at the top right-hand corner.
3. Scroll down to find the “Conference and networking on farm business transfer – Brome-Missisquoi” event.



Martin Caron
UPA President

Annual Journée de la Rentrée highlights several UPA issues



ARTEM ONOPRIENKO/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

As summer drew to a close, about 200 representatives of the Union des producteurs agricoles and its affiliated organizations took part in the annual Journée de la rentrée event Aug. 27.

The event was an opportunity to highlight several of the gains and accomplishments made over the past year, including the reimbursement of agricultural businesses for carbon pricing costs (\$87 million over two years), a 30-per-cent increase in funding grants for new farmers, under the *Appui financier à la relève agricole* program; the elimination of the distinction between full-time and part-time aspiring farmers, which has been long sought by the sector; and the new 2026-2030 government public procurement strategy, which will increase the presence of Quebec food products in public institutions.

Other developments of note include the updated UPA-Hydro-Québec framework for wind farm development in agricultural and forest areas, along with changes to the tender evaluation criteria to penalize projects proposed in agricultural areas; the upcoming completion of the Agreement on the Siting of Power Lines on Farms and in Woodlands; the lifting of the moratorium on increases in cultivated acreage; and changes to the new *Règlement sur les pratiques agroenvironnementales* (agri-environmental practices regulation), including its precedence over municipal regulations.

The new measures for businesses located along the Lac Saint-Pierre shoreline area, just west of Trois Rivières (\$44 million); the scrapping of the new standards for temporary foreign workers' housing, which were poorly suited to the context, overly stringent, and prohibitively costly; and the imposition of a 10-per-cent surtax on imports of canned vegetables (following a federal inquiry into dumping) also represent major achievements.

There are, however, some clouds on the horizon. Canada was once again considering concessions on dairy products in recent negotiations with the United States. These repeated attacks on Canadian farmers not only undermine food security, but also run counter to the federal government's commitments.

There was also considerable concern over the glaring lack of sensitivity, from both the Canadian and Quebec governments, to producers' concerns about the Alto high-speed rail project linking Toronto and Quebec City.

The passage of Bill C-15, which amends the *Expropriation Act* to expedite land acquisition, is particularly troubling, and public support for the project is waning as affected communities learn more about its costs and impact on land and communities. The Alto project is simply the wrong priority.

The Quebec government's support for this project is not the only disappointment when it comes to protecting agricultural land. The adoption of Regulation 1.1 (r. 1.1) under the *Act respecting the protection of agricultural land and agricultural activities* (LPTAA), which makes it easier to use land for non-agricultural purposes, and the refusal to launch a generic BAPE review of the wind energy sector are significant shortcomings. The same goes for the tabling of Bill 5 on priority projects, which would have allowed the LPTAA to be circumvented. The bill died without being passed because of the upcoming October general election, but the intention was clear.

All these matters, along with several others, will undoubtedly be priorities this fall.

Among the issues the UPA has tackled this year is an agreement with Hydro-Québec outlining the framework for wind farm development.

Credit for UPA Dues Program 2026

Revenue of \$25,000 or less

Eligibility criteria for this UPA Program:

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

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

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

UPA L'Union
des producteurs
agricoles

**You might
qualify for the
dues credit.
Get informed!**



PATRICK LAUZON PHOTOGRAPHE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Under the Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network (CAAIN) program five Quebec businesses have received \$4.6 million in funding for eight projects.

Agri-food tech gets \$50-million federal boost

Frederic Serre

The Advocate

– Local Journalism Initiative

Quebec's agri-food sector received some good news in August after federal Industry Minister Mélanie Joly announced an ambitious \$50-million investment package to help develop agri-food technologies across the country. The funding, which will come from the government's Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network (CAAIN), comes at a time of global supply-chain disruptions and rising food costs.

"Canadians deserve a food system that is strong, resilient and ready to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow," Joly said during a press conference in Calgary on Aug. 26.

Under CAAIN, five Quebec agri-food businesses working on a total of eight projects have so far benefitted from \$4.6 million worth of investments as part of an overall federal package of \$13.8 million.

"In our six years of operation, CAAIN has invested over \$42 million in 56 exciting agri-food innovation projects on behalf of the government of Canada," said CAAIN's CEO Darrell Petras.

The funding will also help CAAIN grow its network of smart farms and

commercial farm demonstration sites, while also providing cost-shared support for Canadian businesses involved in the development and adoption of agri-food technologies.

According to Joly, Ottawa will allow CAAIN to invest in at least 40 new projects, pursue \$80 million

in private investment and create and maintain 800 jobs.

This investment will not only build on Canada's talent, expertise and resources by strengthening domestic production and supply chains and contributing to a more productive, resilient and competitive agri-food

sector, Joly said.

CAAIN's network now includes more than 1,100 members. It has invested \$36 million in 51 projects, supported 885 jobs, generated more than 100 intellectual property assets and attracted more than \$500 million in private follow-on investment.

Quebec firms advancing farm tech

Eight projects developed by five Quebec agri-food businesses have benefitted from the federal government's Canadian Agri-Food Automation and Intelligence Network (CAAIN). These projects represent \$4.6 million worth of investments as part of an overall federal package of \$13.8 million.

They include:

Circulus Agtech Solutions of Montreal is developing a fully modular on-farm manure treatment system that integrates biological stabilization, solid-liquid separation, and membrane filtration to convert pig slurry into nitrate-rich biofertilizers, stabilized solids, and reusable clean water.

- **CAAIN Contribution:** \$500,000
- **Total Project Value:** \$1.3 million

Chrysalabs of Montreal is developing an automated solution for real-time, infield mapping of nitrate concentrations.

- **CAAIN Contribution:** \$560,070
- **Total Project Value:** \$2,391,302

Lévis's Centre de développement du porc du Québec is developing an artificial intelligence application to improve the resilience and sustainability of Canadian pig barns.

- **CAAIN Contribution:** \$191,487
- **Total Project Value:** \$635,117

Nectar Technologies of Montreal is developing an AI-based automatic management system to oversee bee-keeping operations in a field setting.

- **CAAIN Contribution:** \$732,353
- **Total Project Value:** \$2,276,554

Baie d'Urfé's MatrixSpec Solutions is using CAAIN funding to develop four major projects, including one that uses hyperspectral imaging and machine learning to develop

an automatic pork quality grading system.

- **CAAIN Contribution:** \$602,279
- **Total Project Value:** \$1,806,581

MatrixSpec Solutions' second project is looking into advancing an enhanced performance commercialization system.

- **CAAIN Contribution:** \$417,183
- **Total Project Value:** \$1,249,823

MatrixSpec Solutions is also developing a prototype for industrial use to assess pork loin marbling without any cutting.

- **CAAIN Contribution:** \$301,428
- **Total Project Value:** \$844,081

MatrixSpec Solutions' fourth project is the development of an AI-driven innovation that, when commercialized, will have the potential to deliver significant socio-economic value.

- **CAAIN Contribution:** \$1,326,888
- **Total Project Value:** \$3,311,152



QFA videoconferences

Save the date!

Beneath the Sod

Rebuilding Soil on 700 Acres

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 30, 2 P.M.

**With Jared Hamilton
of Mountainview Turfgrass Specialists**

Jared Hamilton is a fifth-generation sod farmer in Quyon, in western Quebec's Pontiac region. His crop leaves the farm with the soil attached.

In this videoconference, he explains why that pushed Mountainview Turf into a multi-year regenerative transition, swapping synthetic inputs for compost, natural fertilizers and cover crops. He also gets into the part most people do not expect on a sod farm: getting sheep, cattle and pastured pigs back on the land.

Note that this is a daytime videoconference, starting at 2 p.m.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/jc/81373479617>

Meeting ID: 813 7347 9617

Passcode: 131773

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



Save the date! Beekeeping, Family and Highland Cattle

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 21, 7:30 P.M.

With Syed Mohamed of WB Gold

When Syed Mohamed and his wife Nancy Lanteigne bought a farm in West Bolton two years ago, they were expecting bees – not the dozen Highland cattle the seller casually mentioned on the day they signed.

Join us to hear how two Montreal city-dwellers built a thriving apiary, expanded their honey production and learned cattle farming on-the-fly with help from their neighbours.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/jc/83319237854>
Meeting ID: 833 1923 7854
Passcode: 222091

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

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

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

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

Membership Application

Last name.....

First name.....

Address

Phone.....

Fax

E-mail.....

PRICE

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

MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES

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

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

Signature.....

Date.....

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

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

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

William Van Tassel, Herbertville

Terry Higgins, Pontiac

Matthew Morin, Denholm

Peter Bienz, Lacolle

Eddy and Nancy Scott, Quyon

Cynthia Gordon, Bringham

Gibb Drury, Alcove

Andrius Valevicius, Canton de Hatley



The Miner Report

Do genetics influence a calf's susceptibility to disease?

Victoria Blaney

William H. Miner

Agricultural Research Institute

It is well known that the largest contributors to morbidity and mortality in pre-weaning calves are digestive issues and pneumonia. High levels of disease have substantial economic consequences in dairy heifer rearing systems, as the cost of raising a dairy replacement heifer to the close-up period is approximately US\$2,619 in 2026.

Treating digestive issues and pneumonia during the pre-weaning phase increases this cost, with the cost per calf for treating digestive issues is US\$27.50, according to studies, and respiratory disease US\$43.99.

In our current market, the value of a replacement heifer is high, increasing the need to improve the health of these animals to support long-term productivity. Both digestive issues and pneumonia are influenced by various environmental and management factors on the farm.

New health traits

The Council on Dairy Breeding announced the incorporation of two new health traits, which were introduced in August 2026. These traits will include Resistance to Diarrhea (DIA) and Resistance to Respiratory Problems (RSP) and will be reported as predicted transmitting ability (PTA) for both Holsteins and Jerseys. This leads to the important question of whether some calves are born with a greater disease susceptibility.

Studies in 2024 reported a low genetic variance of heritability of diarrhea and respiratory disease. Although diarrhea and respiratory disease had a moderate correlation, suggesting these diseases are primarily influenced by the environment and management of calves. The same studies compared a sire's estimated breeding value with the rate of disease incidence in their daughters. Calves born to the bottom 10 per cent of sires were 1.8 times more likely to develop respiratory disease and 1.9 times more likely to develop diarrhea.

Maternal health a factor

In addition to sire effects, maternal health may also influence calf disease risk. A 2025 study reported calves born to dams affected by mastitis or claw disorders were more likely to develop



TRUE PIXEL ART/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Genetics, the microbiome, management and the environment all factor into a calf's susceptibility to disease.

diarrhea or pneumonia. However, could these observed associations be partially confounded by management practices?

For example, producers may provide more intensive monitoring or care to calves from genetically superior or otherwise high-value animals, potentially influencing disease detection or treatment rates.

Management factors

Furthermore, environmental and management factors remain major determinants of calf health and should be considered when interpreting these associations.

Nutrition, stress, toxicants, maternal care, pair interactions, housing conditions – all impact the health of the calf and its non-genetic inherited factors. These factors include the microbiota, which reside in and on the body of the animal. The intergenerational transmission of microbiota may increase the inheritance of disease susceptibility. The microbiota is dynamic and can be modulated throughout the animal's

lifetime. The future of breeding could incorporate these non-genetic inherited factors, although there is very little known about how to implement this.

Modulation includes appropriate colostrum management and the use of direct-fed microbials, which are beneficial for the development of the gastrointestinal tract in the calf. Supplementation with *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* fermentation-derived products (SCFP) in calves increased average daily gain and reduced the incidence of diarrhea. However, when fed to close-up cows, there were inconclusive results on the impact on the calf.

Complex interaction

Replication of maternal supplementation of direct-fed microbials and their impact on the calf is needed. The microbiota is vertically transmitted through the dam to the calf, from maternal sources such as colostrum, feces and vaginal secretions. The environment that a calf lives in has a strong influence on the development of the gut

microbiota later in the neonatal period. Together, these findings emphasize that disease susceptibility is shaped by a complex interaction between inherited and environmental influences, with management practices playing a central role in determining calf health.

Overall, calf susceptibility to disease during the pre-weaning period is determined by the complex interaction among genetics, the microbiome, management and the environment. Caution should be exercised when considering genetics as a major influence, given the low heritability of disease. As we continue to collect more data and improve record-keeping systems, these new health traits may become more reliable. Above all, good calf husbandry should take precedence.

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.



WILLIAM EDGE/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

A trade-off still exists between building soil carbon stores and other greenhouse gas emissions.

Economic factors contributing to soil deterioration

Latest FAO report says knowledge at farm level is not the problem

Christopher Bonasia

The Advocate

– Local Journalism Initiative

North American soil management has delivered mixed results in the last 10 years as more than half of soils have deteriorated worldwide, according to a new report that warns of threats to future food production.

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) 2026 Status of the World's Soil Resources report found that, in an analysis of global soil conditions between 2015 and 2025, "soil erosion emerges as the most severe and interconnected threat to soil health."

Globally, 81 per cent of soil assessments found soil erosion trends during that time to be poor or very poor, and 65 per cent had deteriorated.

FAO also stated progress on reversing global soil deterioration at the farm level is not held back by a lack of knowledge. Rather, farmers and land managers "often face practical, economic or institutional barriers" to adopting sustainable soil management practices.

These practices are more likely to be used "when they deliver clear short-term economic benefits, such as improved soil fertility, increased yields, reduced input costs or greater resilience to droughts."

Fair, and dropping

In Canada, the United States and northern Mexico, soil erosion was judged to be "fair" – a step above "poor" – but deteriorating. Southern Mexico was assessed in a separate region, alongside Latin America and the Caribbean.

The report states that tillage is a major driver of soil erosion in Canada, the U.S. and northern Mexico. Although soil erosion risk in Canada has generally decreased since 1981, the evidence indicates that tillage rates are increasing because of rising herbicide resistance and crop residue production. The areas in Canada with the greatest erosion risk include southern Ontario and parts of the Maritimes.

"This disturbing trend represents a reversal of significant progress made over previous decades in the adoption of no-till," the FAO report states.

Crop genetics has helped

Results were also "fair" but with varied progress across North America for nutrient mismanagement, as advances in crop genetics and management have lowered surpluses in some cases but have left some hotspots of nutrient loss.

Biodiversity loss was judged similarly, but with low confidence due to insufficient knowledge. Soil sealing – which happens when forest or agricultural soils are paved over – was judged "poor" and deteriorating because of urban sprawl alongside decreasing urban density.

Meanwhile, assessment for the overall state of soil carbon was "good" and improving. This trend might be partly due to increasing crop yields that require higher carbon inputs to the soil. Other possible drivers may include efforts to increase cropland soil carbon storage to combat climate change, and carbon stored in forestland. However, natural carbon sinks like peatlands are at risk of becoming carbon sources as global temperatures warm, and increasingly worse wildfire seasons – also linked to climate change

– are releasing stored carbon into the atmosphere.

Grassland offer opportunity

But the report suggests that "grasslands offer more opportunity for soil (carbon) management," and "improved practices on overgrazed grasslands can increase (soil organic carbon) stocks, such as fertilizer addition and rotational grazing, including vegetation and livestock management."

And on croplands, intensified cropping systems that use double cropping, or cover crops, can also "mimic" perennial systems and result in higher carbon storage.

Though there are opportunities for enhancing soil carbon in North American croplands, the report says there are still uncertainties and obstacles, like socio-economic barriers and potential trade-offs between building soil carbon stores and other greenhouse gas emissions. Future soil carbon gains might also be held back by "growing demands for alternate uses of plant biomass, reducing its return to soil."



Milking parlour or milking robot? Or perhaps a combination of the two?

Simon Jetté-Nantel,
Omar Sandoval,
Catherine Cross
and
Francis Morneau
Lactanet

Even though the strengths and limitations of each milking system are well known, choosing the system that best fits a farm is not always straightforward.

While robotic milking can improve production depending on a farm's initial situation, herd productivity generally remains comparable to that of parlour-milked herds.

Another important consideration is the investment required for robotization, estimated at between \$2,000 and \$3,000 per cow in 2024. When the robot and its data are used effectively, the investment can be justified.

Although productivity and financial considerations are important, the choice between robotic and parlour milking systems often comes down to labour-related factors, including working conditions and quality of life, time and cost savings, and employee management.

Working conditions and quality of life

Milking is a routine and repetitive task, which is why it can cause musculo-skeletal disorder, especially if it is the employee's primary task. Although certain measures can be taken to reduce the risk of injury, this reality raises occupational health and safety concerns and, as a result, has a direct impact on the attractiveness of the position and becomes a major challenge for producers, both in terms of recruiting and retaining workers assigned to this task.

This repetitive nature is also one of the reasons why it lends itself well to automation. It is, therefore, not surprising that many associate automation with an improvement in working conditions and quality of life.

However, in robotic milking, breakdowns and problems can occur at any time of day or night. This can be a disadvantage, especially for smaller businesses that can hardly afford to have several qualified staff members available to maintain and repair the robots at any hour.

The value of time and cost savings

Studies conducted by Lactanet in 2011 estimated that robotic milking systems



IVAN_KISLITSIN/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

In 2024, estimates of the investment required for robotization of a milking operation was pegged at \$2,000 and \$3,000 per cow.

reduce milking time by 75 to 80 per cent and save between 2 and 3.8 minutes per cow per day compared with milking parlours.

Similarly, Progressive Dairy Operators (PDO) reported in their 2024 study that robotic herds require an average of 9.3 minutes of labour per cow per day, compared with 11.5 minutes for herds milked in parlours (excluding rotary milking parlours). This difference represents a labour savings of approximately 2.2 minutes per cow per day. Depending on the estimate used, robotic milking can save farmers between 800 and 1,100 hours of labour per year for every 60 cows.

According to PDO's 2024 report, wages for employees responsible for milking cows ranged from \$16.71 to \$23.50 per hour. Given the labour savings associated with robotic milking, this translates into labour cost savings of approximately \$13,000 to \$26,000 per year for every 60 cows.

A key question is whether the labour savings associated with robotic milking justify the additional investment when temporary foreign workers (TFW) are available.

In Quebec, the minimum wage for TFWs is \$16.60 per hour. However, the total cost to the employer is often considerably higher once additional employment-related expenses are factored in. Mandatory employer-provided-housing alone can add \$2 to \$5 per hour, depending on housing

costs and the number of hours worked. Employers also incur expenses related to communication services such as Wi-Fi and transportation. As a result, the total cost of employing a TFW can reach as high as \$25 per hour. When employers choose to purchase housing rather than rent it, they must weigh the potential benefits such as capital gains and greater assurance of having adequate accommodations available, against the drawbacks, including property maintenance responsibilities and expenses, financing costs, and impacts on the business's cash flow.

Producers should also consider the lead times associated with hiring TFWs, which can exceed five or six months. Such delays can pose significant constraints if labour needs change unexpectedly or evolve rapidly. Although, workforce networking programs are being developed and could provide additional hiring options, while helping employers respond more quickly to labor shortages in the coming months.

Employee management skills

While it's often said that to make an investment in robotic milking profitable, producers must ensure the efficient use of their robots, the same principle applies to the workforce. To get the most out of employees, there must be capacity to support and mentor them effectively. This often relies on strong communication skills and

can pose a significant challenge for many producers. However, it's essential to factor this into strategic decisions, especially when considering a business model that requires more labour.

What will the availability of labor be? And what is a farm's capacity to support, train and retain employees?

The good news is that personnel management is a skill that can be learned. Producers just need to determine whether they are ready to invest the time and energy required to develop their staff management skills, or to engage internal or external resources to do so.

The best of both worlds?

For several years now, batch milking has been promoted as a way to reduce investment in robotic equipment while retaining many of the benefits of robotic milking. Unfortunately, the concept does not seem to be well-suited to all herds across Canada, particularly since most examples involve large herds with 10 to 15 robots.

Ultimately, the choice between milking parlour and robotic milking systems extends beyond productivity and investment costs. When evaluating labour-saving technologies, producers must also consider labour availability, labour costs, and their capacity to effectively manage employees, as these factors can have a significant influence on long-term success.

Grains



Producers call for commitments to meet grain sector challenges

As the Quebec election approaches, the Producteurs de grains du Québec are asking political parties to make clear and ambitious commitments to support a strategic part of Quebec's economy, namely land occupancy and food security.

In a press release issued Aug. 26, the PGQ asked the political parties seeking to govern Quebec for the following key commitments:

1. Fully compensate farms for the amounts spent on carbon pricing so those funds can be reinvested in farms, in addition to exempting the agricultural sector from carbon pricing in the future.
2. Increase the budget of the Ministère de l'Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation du Québec (MAPAQ) to 2 per cent of the government's total spending.
3. Support grain producers to deal with new risks of recurrent and more damaging losses, in particular by strengthening the crop insurance program and establishing a truly permanent program to provide compensation for agri-environmental practices.
4. Recognize the expertise of producers by focusing on advisory services, research and knowledge transfer rather than increasing the regulatory burden on farm operations.

"Grain producers have demonstrated their ability to innovate, improve their practices and contribute to achieving Quebec's environmental objectives," said Sylvain Pion, president of the Producteurs de grains du Québec. "The next government must show its support by providing them with the tools they need to remain competitive and continue to contribute to Quebec's prosperity amid significant trade tensions. They need an environment that fosters their success: programs tailored to their realities, effective risk management tools, predictable support, and regulations that take into account their reality, both economically and in terms of competitiveness."

Webinar on markets

The PGQ's Market Information Service invites you to a free webinar on Thursday, Sept. 24. Étienne Lafrance, the PGQ's market information officer, will discuss the outlook for the 2026 harvest, with the participation of Jean-Philippe Boucher, agr., MBA, grain marketing consultant at Grainwiz. Join us at 7:30 p.m.

For more information, go to:
pgq.ca/calendrier-des-evenements/webinaire-des-marches

Mycotoxin reminder

As the corn harvest approaches, we need to remember the importance of proper mycotoxin management in grain corn. Mycotoxins are produced by certain fungi and can affect crop quality and yield.

Concertation Grains Québec has developed a fact sheet listing the main strategies to adopt. It includes recommendations on choosing hybrids with the Bt gene, crop residue management, harvest practices and storage conditions.

For information, see the fact sheet (in French) at
<https://concertationgrainsquebec.ca/nos-realizations>



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.



The Resourceful Naturalist



Paul J. Hetzler
ISA Certified Arborist

Although pigeons are best known for their expertise in whitewashing statues, window ledges and other outdoor structures they roost upon, these common birds have some uncommon talents that few know about.

Pigeons can do stuff like hear earthquakes before they can be felt, and accurately locate signs of cancer in medical imaging. And they can look at a painting and tell whether it's a Monet or a Picasso, which is more than I can say. Now, pigeons are being studied to see if they can teach drones how to fly better.

The sort we tend to encounter are rock pigeons, a domestic species first brought over from Europe in the early 1600s as a source of fresh meat and eggs, and to carry messages. Had windshields been invented back then, people might have thought twice before doing so, but they could not have imagined what kinds of messes these birds were going to make. Rock pigeons soon escaped captivity, and have now spread through all of Central and South America, and North America into southern Canada. They also took advantage of milder conditions along the Pacific Ocean, moving up the west coast to southern Alaska.

Pigeons feel at home in cities because multi-storey buildings mimic the rock ledges where these birds like to nest in the wild, which is why urban dwellers cross paths with pigeons on a daily basis. But in the hinterlands you will find plenty of pigeons as well. They love roosting in barns and outbuildings. On the plus side, they glean spilled grain, and feed on insect pests that damage crops. The downside is that they decorate tractors and other equipment with their droppings. On a more serious note, their poop can contaminate hay and other types of feed.

Dove is a pigeon

We do have pigeons that are native to Canada. The most numerous is the mourning dove, named for its melancholy song. As a kid, I thought they were "morning doves," which made sense to me since early morning was when I usually heard them.

It turns out the only difference between pigeons and doves is a name. In fact, Picasso's iconic painting entitled *Dove of Peace*, a global symbol of peace

PIGEON POWER: Studies look at how they can teach drones how to fly better



KAREL BOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK.COM

Based on studies on pigeons, drones programed for long flights might need different algorithms from those focused on short flights.

and unity that he created for the 1949 Paris Peace Conference, was based on a pigeon he had. But "the pigeon of peace" was deemed less apt to inspire lovey-dovey-ness in folks. Marketing is impressive. Canada's other native pigeon is the band-tailed pigeon, which make their homes in mountainous forests along the Pacific coast.

However, our most famous (or infamous) native pigeon no longer exists. Passenger pigeons, a species whose estimated population was 3 billion to 5 billion in 1800, were hunted to extinction by 1914. This might explain why their Old World cousins, the rock pigeons, continue to mete out their sloppy revenge on our statuary, cars and park benches. (Please note that excessive buildup of bird droppings can cause illness. Young children and the elderly are most at risk of infection.)

Many pigeon skills

Getting back to the neat feats that pigeons are capable of, they're as good at counting as monkeys are, and have a knack for word recognition. And as we all know from the 1992 comedy *Home Alone Part 2*, pigeons can help fend off home invaders. Especially if you have 300 trained pigeons on hand, and inept burglars who are coated with grain.

Thanks in part to the way their livers function, pigeons have some of the

strongest homing abilities of any animal on Earth. During the First World War in particular, but also in the Second World War, Allied armies used carrier pigeons to send messages, even under heavy fire near the front lines. In the civilian world, pigeons delivered "pigeon-gram" mail in New Zealand for a decade. By the way, carrier (homing) pigeons are rock pigeons that have been trained to reliably get from point A to point B and back again – they're not a separate species.

Studies conducted this year

Two studies published in the summer of 2026, one from the California Institute of Technology (CIT) and one from the University of British Columbia (UBC), focused on pigeon flight. The studies' purpose was to challenge a longstanding assumption that birds lock their eyes during flight. If this proved false, then a roving camera angle could improve autonomous drone flight, which would require tweaks to the AI algorithm. If the assumption was true, then the current algorithm could stand.

In an awkward twist, the two studies directly contradicted one another. You're probably wondering who was right, the American team or the Canadian one. Strangely enough, they were both right. It's not often that honesty and

diplomacy overlap so nicely, but there you go. Here are the details:

What they focus on

Both teams outfitted a group of pigeons with high-tech gear (some of it oddly fashionable) that monitored the birds' head position at all times, while recording flight parameters, like speed, altitude and distance. The difference was that the UBC team tracked how pigeons flew on longer, higher altitude flight paths, like a surveillance drone might take. They noted that the birds changed head positions often, and sometimes appeared to be looking at various landmarks on the terrain below.

On the other hand, the CIT study measured how pigeons flew at lower altitudes on shorter trips, the kind of paths that delivery drones might take. Their data showed the birds essentially locked their eyes during flight. Taken together, the two studies appear to suggest that for the greatest flight efficiency, AI-based drones might need different algorithms depending on what their mission is.

If pigeon research leads to a bilateral confluence of events like this again, maybe we can add international relations to the birds' list of skills.

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



ELECTION: Buying more local, making young farmers top priority

From Page 1

Milliard says his government would give greater prominence to Quebec foods in public institutions by developing regional partnerships between Quebec agri-food businesses and public institutions to increase the presence of locally produced goods in schools, hospitals, long-term care facilities (CHSLDs) and other public institutions.

"We will create a funding program to roll out food voucher initiatives that strengthen short supply chains across all regions of Quebec," he said.

CAQ kept carbon pricing promise

Not to be outdone by the Liberals, the Coalition Avenir du Québec (CAQ) is also looking to woo farmers with promises to reimburse agricultural businesses for costs related to carbon pricing, with a promised budget of \$87 million. The goal, says Quebec Premier Christine Fréchette, is to offer the next generation of farmers hope and continuity.

"The next generation of farmers will become a priority in all our government programs," she said. "Each new agricultural program must include a component dedicated to the next generation of farmers and address the realities of young agricultural businesses."

Fréchette says the CAQ government has kept its promise of easing the financial pressure on the agricultural sector with the reimbursement of carbon costs borne by agricultural businesses, as well as increased financial support for the next generation of farmers.

More than 15,500 farmers are receiving reimbursements based on actual expenses, automatically and without having to fill out any forms, she says.

Fréchette said her platform focuses specifically on the carbon tax, the next generation of farmers, the role of Quebec-grown food in public institutions, and the administrative burden, as well as rising inflation and land costs – all of which have weighed on farmers' finances, she said.

Her government would increase financial support program for agricultural succession by 30 per cent to \$65,000.

"This is a significant increase, especially since, as far as I can recall, there hasn't been an increase for this program since 2013," Fréchette said, adding that she hopes this measure will encourage more young people to take over family farms and get involved in agriculture.

Fréchette says her party's intention is to increase the presence of Quebec-produced foods in schools, hospitals and public institutions. While acknowledging that the measure would entail costs, it would have the advantage of benefiting the agricultural sector and the Quebec economy.

For Fréchette, adherence to supply management is non-negotiable.

"Farmers play an essential role: they feed the people of Quebec," she said. "To enable them to do what they do best, we must support them. Today, our new government is stepping up and protecting our future by building a strong next generation of farmers, trained to meet the challenges ahead."

Fréchette believes that a balance must be struck between the impacts on agricultural land and energy development in Quebec. Coexistence is possible, she says and various projects could mean additional income for agricultural producers.

"There is no question of sacrificing prime farmland, but other lands less suitable for agriculture could be used for projects in light of the major energy challenges on the horizon," she said.

"I am committed to protecting it in its entirety. Supply management is here to stay," she said, adding she intends to work closely with the federal government during negotiations on the free-trade agreement with the United States, while noting that she has received positive feedback from Ottawa.

Fréchette says her government is strengthening the competitiveness of the agricultural sector at a time when businesses must contend with high operating costs and increased competition elsewhere in the country. These announcements reflect Quebec's commitment to supporting the sector while preparing the next generation of farmers, she said.

PQ to help food programs

Meanwhile, Parti Québécois leader Paul St-Pierre-Plamondon says his party will reverse the "politically-motivated decision" announced by Fréchette on May 25 to reduce the QST on certain grocery items. Instead, the party will invest \$100 million per year where urgent needs exist – namely, in aid and food security organizations to help young people in schools, families and disadvantaged seniors.

"To give the impression of tackling



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Liberal leader Charles Milliard (LEFT) aims to help producers grow their businesses, ensure succession and create more markets for local products. CAQ's Christine Fréchette will increase financial support programs for agricultural succession. PQ leader Paul St-Pierre-Plamondon wants young people to learn to cook and make informed choices about their diets.

the cost of living, Christine Fréchette exempted cut-up fruit, individual muffins, and salted peanuts from tax. \$100 million for a grand total of \$1 in savings per week for families," St-Pierre-Plamondon said. "It's hard to imagine a more half-hearted measure. This is right in line with François Legault's approach."

"A Parti Québécois government will have much more useful and intelligent solutions for Quebecers who can't make ends meet."

In 2025, food banks in Quebec received 3.1 million requests per month, representing a 37-per-cent increase over three years. Thirty-five per cent of those receiving assistance are children – nearly 50,000 more than in 2022, St-Pierre-Plamondon said.

"In schools, one in two children in Quebec reports feeling hungry upon arriving in class almost every day. In 2019, one in 10 households experienced food insecurity. In 2023 – the most recent year for which data is available – that figure rose to one in five. Every day, 319,000 Quebecers reduce their portion sizes, skip meals or simply go without food because they cannot afford it."

"I pledge that all children in disadvantaged schools will now have enough to eat. The goal is that, wherever possible, students will have access to breakfast, lunch and a snack. Organizations such as the Breakfast Club, Cantine pour tous, or any other similar organization will be able to expand their services across all regions.

Up to 100,000 additional students in more than 200 elementary and high schools will be able to benefit from new meal services.

"With this measure, 200 new educational day-care centres will be able to provide meals to our youngest children. This is good news for educational success. It's good news for the health of children, who will benefit from a healthy diet," said St-Pierre-Plamondon.

The PQ says \$100 million will also fund the development of nutrition education in Quebec schools, with a target of at least 70 per cent of Quebec's public schools.

"Young people will learn to cook and make informed choices about their diets. Quebec-grown foods and the fight against food waste will also be a priority," St-Pierre-Plamondon said.

Under a St-Pierre-Plamondon government, food banks will be able to meet a growing demand, he said, adding that they will be able to "purchase more food and put together more food baskets for people in need. For seniors, organizations such as meal delivery services, will have new resources to deliver nutritious, low-cost meals to their homes."

The PQ hopes farmers will warm up to the party's efforts to support the next generation of agricultural workers through solutions that the PQ describes as more agile, more flexible and better suited to the realities of the next generation of farmers, St-Pierre-Plamondon said.



Cookin' with the Advocate

Simple, easy and flavourful are all in season right now

Cynthia Gunn
QFA's Food Writer

It's difficult to say whether I can classify myself as super cheap or super extravagant in the matter of food.

I bumped up against this seemingly contradictory situation when forced to purchase fries at a fast-food outlet the other day. It's not that I don't like fries, occasionally they're even damn good. It's that, because I was running late and didn't pack any food with me, I was forced to buy them out of sheer necessity, just to tide me over. I found that I resented paying \$4.50 for a small pouch of mediocre fries when what I would rather be eating, what I should have been enjoying, was a homemade packed lunch for two-thirds the price.

And that's two-thirds the price based on good quality food.

When it comes to buying ingredients and things like cheese and bread, I am picky – what some would call extravagant. If it's not good quality, I will not buy it.

A couple of weeks ago I bumped up against a similar situation of what could be viewed as taste and quality on one side, stacked against convenience, habit and a desire for simplicity on the other.

A friend was over for lunch who, by their own admission, didn't really cook, preferred to keep things simple and was content to eat run-of-the-mill processed food. It's not that they didn't appreciate good food if it was placed in front of them, and they enjoyed well-prepared and adventurous restaurant food. At home, however, flour tortillas, packaged soup and cereal ruled.

Knowing all this, I thought, OK I have some home-made leek-and-potato soup in the freezer lots of zucchini, black cherry tomatoes and basil in the garden. Let's get a healthy and flavourful meal together from mostly garden ingredients, and incorporate flour tortillas for familiarity.

And, speaking of leek-and-potato soup, that season is almost upon us, the potatoes are dug and the leek tops are thick and deep green. But I digress.

Refocusing on the meal I was preparing: everything turned out to be delicious and was relatively simple to prepare. The meal was pronounced "very flavourful." I started by sautéing zucchini medallions in butter until a wee bit soft, then added garlic for a minute. I made extra to have with chicken breasts that evening. I then grated two-year-old cheddar, some mozzarella and a bit of provolone that was decidedly hard but, as I am thrifty and hate throwing out food, I just use a super fine grater. You can always do that when cheese goes hard and then add it to whatever you are making for flavour.

I piled this on to flour tortillas, topped with the zucchini medallions, and baked at about 400 degrees until the edges were getting brown and the cheese was bubbling.

I cut the cherry tomatoes into chunks, tossed them with lots of shredded basil, a bit of garlic and a good



CYNTHIA GUNN, THE ADVOCATE

There is a wealth of locally grown produce available now. Take advantage. Here, zucchini medallions sautéed in butter and garlic are baked on tortillas with a little grated old cheddar and mozzarella. Simple and flavourful.

glug of olive oil. This was put onto the table to be spooned onto the pieces of baked flour tortillas.

What I would really like to do is make homemade flat bread. Better yet, get some of that dough from the guys at the market who make falafels. Maybe next week.

The flavour that my friend referred to is the collateral damage of the industrialized food system that started in earnest after the Second World War and largely feeds us today. The natural complexity of soil – the substance chef and writer Dan Barber says is "the single best predictor of how food will taste," was for the most part lost in the process. This affects taste because only a strong plant grown in healthy soil can produce great flavour, Barber explained in an opinion piece in *The Guardian* in May. "A weak plant doesn't produce the polyphenols and the phytonutrients that make things taste good," he said. "It's hard to think

of a discovery that's been more disastrous for the flavour of food."

We are unbelievably lucky to be able to access this flavour. This is the time of the year to go all out on the amazing wealth of locally grown produce available to us either from our own gardens or from the many market gardeners we are privileged to have in our communities. Add some butter, olive oil, a little garlic, perhaps some great cheese and, of course, your imagination and the permutations of what can be done with the bounty is almost endless.

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

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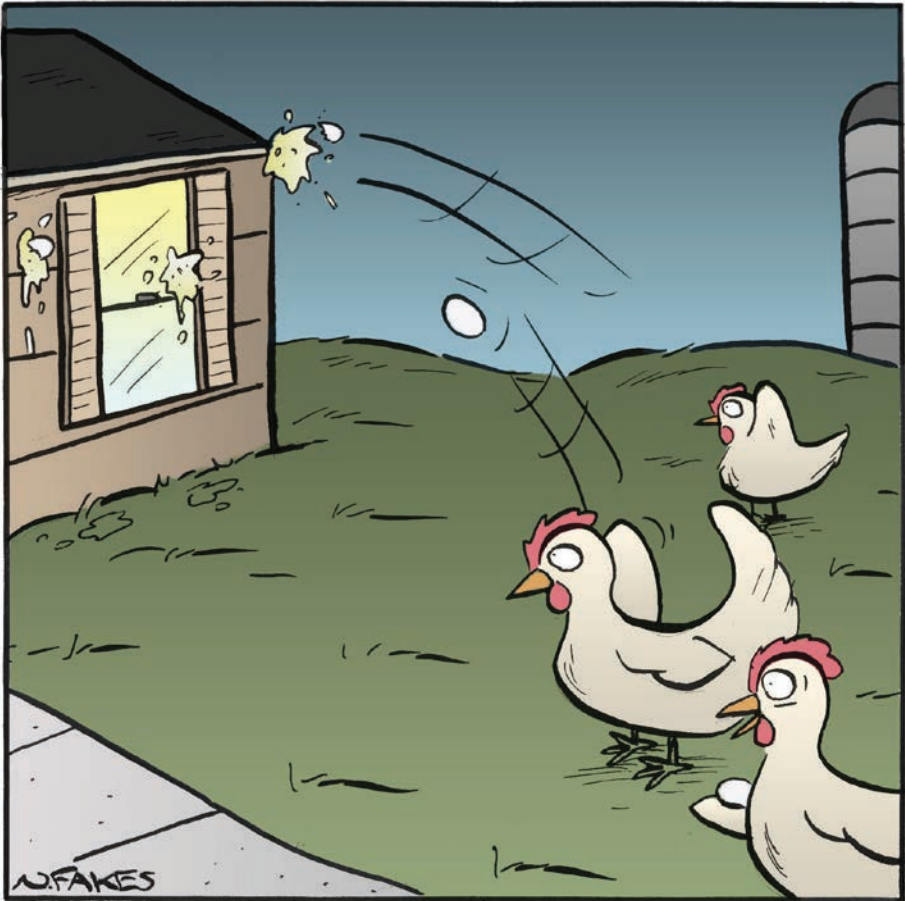
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