



National Farmers Union  
Union Nationale des Fermiers



# union farmer

Quarterly

SUMMER 2017 / Vol. 23 Issue 2

## 2017 NFU Youth Retreat



**Back Row (L to R):** Jeanette Silvay (Region 5 Youth Advisor), Christopher Sanford-Beck (Region 6 Youth Advisor), Lydia Carpenter (Vice President Policy), Dana Penrice (Youth Vice President), Rachelle Ternier (Region 6 Board Member), Laurence Barchichat (Union Paysanne), Bryan Dale (Associate Member), Pierre-Olivier Brassard (Union Paysanne), Phil Gervais (Region 1 Youth Advisory). **Front Row (L to R):** Steve Laing (Region 3 Council Member), Nikki Wiart (Region 7 Member), David Mazur-Goulet (Region 2 Youth Advisor), Ayla Fenton (Youth President). *Photo credit - Sara Dent. (see Youth Report on page 5)*

Strong Communities. Sound Policies. Sustainable Farms.

## Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

**"**Being involved in the Save Our Prison Farms campaign over the past 16 months has been both frustrating and invigorating – a combination many NFU activists will recognize, I'm sure ... Frustrating that Public Safety Canada says the prison farms have to go, when more than 90% of Canadians think they should stay ... Invigorating because so much of the community supports the cause ... Invigorating because the fight for better programming in prisons is a worthwhile fight. Invigorating because this issue combines so many perspectives – it's a food and farm issue, a social justice issue, an environmental issue, an economic issue, and more."

The excerpt above is from an article by Dianne Dowling titled *The Save Our Prison Farms Campaign* which appeared in the Fall 2010 Union Farmer Quarterly. Along with being a key organizer of the Save Our Prison Farms campaign at the time, Dianne was (and still is) the President of NFU Local 316 and a dairy farmer. The NFU, through members like Dianne, played a major role in drawing attention to the loss of Canada's six prison farms – one each in the Prairie provinces, two in the Kingston area of Ontario and one in New Brunswick.

Beef farmer, Jeff Peters, an NFU member and current director of NFU Local 316 also worked tirelessly on the campaign. I am not sure I will ever forget the image of his donkey, which attended

countless rallies and demonstrations, with a sign on its back saying *Conservative Prison Farm Advisor*. As Dianne noted in her 2010 article, the fight to save the prison farms was invigorating because there was so much community support. Sister Bridget Doherty from the Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul in Kingston was one of the other community members who took an active role in the campaign from the beginning.

In May, 2017 the efforts of the above three Save Our Prison Farms campaigners were finally recognized when Dianne, Jeff and Sister Bridget were named to a new Prison Farm Advisory Council along with NFU Board member, Tony Straathof and three other members of the community. The Save Our Prison Farm campaign has been covered in the *UFQ* countless times over the past eight years and the latest developments are further highlighted in this issue on page 20.

The NFU has always been front and centre in the campaign to Save Our Prison Farms. As NFU members and leaders, the hard work we do to advocate on behalf of family farmers, rural communities and our environment often goes unnoticed. When our work is acknowledged we all need to celebrate. **On behalf of NFU members across Canada, I want to give a huge thank you to the NFU members in Local 316 and beyond who attended rallies, spoke to parliamentary committees, wrote letters, and attended countless meetings to strategize and/or to raise the issue with yet another community member or politician.**

—Ann Slater  
Chair, Editorial Advisory Committee

## union farmer quarterly

Official publication of the National Farmers Union  
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PRINTED AT ST. PETER'S PRESS, MUENSTER, SK, AGREEMENT NO. 40063391, POSTAGE PAID AT MUENSTER, SASKATCHEWAN.

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATE:**  
Non-Members \$25.00; Institutions \$35.00  
(price includes monthly newsletter and quarterly magazine)

*We believe a strong rural community in Canada is an essential part of our national culture. In the National Farmers Union, we work collectively to strengthen the farm community by: building ties between farmers in all parts of Canada, with farmers in other countries and with non-farm people; ensuring all people have access to an adequate, nutritious and safely-produced food supply; promoting equity for women and young people in the farming community; promoting social support systems that permit people in farming communities a good quality of life; promoting the development and maintenance of a Canadian infrastructure to serve Canadian goals in food production and trade; and helping governments to form fair and constructive policies related to food production and food trade.*





# A message from the President

— by Jan Slomp, National President

## Revisiting NAFTA

Common Frontiers (CF) is a pan-Canadian organization of civil society groups created in the days of growing concern about the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement before it came into effect in 1987. Common Frontiers broadened and continued its work by opposing NAFTA and helping to stop the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) in the 1990's. It has warned against many trade agreements since then. When U.S. President Trump announced his intention to renegotiate NAFTA, CF asked me to participate in a Tri-National civil society meeting in Mexico City on May 26 and 27, 2017. The goal of the meeting was to analyze the affects of 25 years of NAFTA on various sectors of society in each of the three countries and to prepare for possible, even worse, scenarios resulting from the re-negotiations with a common approach within the three countries.

Looking at the affects of NAFTA on agriculture and farmers, it is safe to say that between the three countries the Mexican farmers are hit hardest. Millions have lost their land and livelihood and in desperation, many undertake the dangerous journey to cross the desert and the US border. They become (illegal) migrant workers, often in the very agricultural sector in the US that drove them out of farming with subsidized exports dumped into Mexico below the cost of production. As Mexico ramped up climate specific fruits and vegetables for export, NAFTA made it a dumping ground for subsidized staple foods from the US, like corn, wheat, beans, chickens, pork, beef and milk. Mexico, the birthplace of corn, has become the number one corn importer in the world. Mexico was, and still is, perfectly able to feed itself. It is very convenient for traders and processors that greenhouse gas emissions from transport across national borders are neither counted as emissions for the exporting nor the importing country.

NAFTA has made it a challenge to maintain land trusts and historic communal lands arrangements in Mexico. Mining firms, including some from Canada, have stepped in to extract more natural resources from open pit mines, displacing farm families. A

Mexican farmer from Chihuahua told us how desperation in the countryside is fueling the escalation of violence in the illegal drug trade.

In all three countries, trade agreements have eliminated borders to expose regional production in a regional market to price depressing product from elsewhere. Once local production, as a result of this price depressing practice, has drastically diminished or is eliminated, consumers see higher prices in the store as they have no alternative supply. De-linking farmers from their local or regional market drastically reduces the farmer's share of the consumer dollar. Moving a small amount of product around in a deregulated market is enough to create the effects of oversupply everywhere. Former NFU President Roy Atkinson steadily pointed out that farmers need orderly marketing, as the first bushel of perceived oversupply triggers a price drop everywhere.

A Mexican Senator invited me, as part of a delegation of Canadian and US farmers, into his office to talk about NAFTA re-negotiations. He mentioned that he sees Mexican rural society coming every day closer to the breaking point and that the status quo or more of the same NAFTA policies are not going to bring improvements. He expressed frustration about top down orders to sign trade agreements, as most are undemocratically concocted behind closed doors.

We may see signs of NAFTA renegotiations this summer. Common Frontiers and civil society groups across Mexico, the US and Canada are in solidarity with people across the North American region, preparing for a common strategy and action against a new agreement that may be even more hostile to farmers, citizens and the environment. Watch for details on actions which will take place, most likely in October.

The Political Declaration of the Encounter of Social Organizations of Canada, the United States and Mexico held in Mexico City, May 26 – 27, 2017 can be found at: <http://tradejustice.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Tri-national-Declaration.pdf>. A report of the meeting can be found at: <http://tradejustice.ca/tjn-tri-national-nafta-meetings/>.

— In Solidarity, Jan Slomp





# A message from the Women's President

— by Coral Sproule, Women's President

**W**ith the rain pouring down in Ontario this spring, we had perhaps more time than usual to become engaged on some issues that affect us as farmers and small business owners. So it has been with interest that I have followed the May announcement by Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, that our provincial minimum wage will rise from the current \$11.40 per hour to \$15 per hour by 2019. Ontario will be the second province in recent months to raise the wage standard; following Alberta's announcement last fall of the same increase within a similar timeline.

There has been a polarized commentary by rural small business owners and farmers both on social media, in conversations around lunch tables and out in our fields. As farmers with one or more persons under our employ, we cannot hear this news without evaluating how it will potentially affect our businesses, but also our communities and in a greater context, the economy in this province. The gut reaction of many local small business owners has been to denounce this move to a more liveable wage standard as they feel it will negatively affect their often quite small profit margins. Some worry that they may have to increase their prices in order to meet this changing facet of small business management. This reaction seems natural to those in a somewhat tenuous financial position, especially those who are just now establishing their markets and sussing out what the market can bare.

Thankfully there have been some examples to follow that show no evidence linking a decline in small businesses after such a seemingly dramatic minimum wage increase. For most people living on a tight budget but who are fortunate enough to be employed or operate a business, this increase should be seen as a welcome change. With a subsequent rise in the potential for disposable income in a rising number of households, this should translate into potential increases in sales and growth for small businesses.

For our allies in labour and other union movements across the country, as well as for advocates for social and economic justice, this move could be noted as a definitive positive step in the right direction. For much too long, too many families have struggled while working at a minimum wage which clearly is not very liveable in comparison to rising inflation on essential products and services. It is felt by supporters of the minimum wage increase that most labourers in this country who are surviving on the current minimum wage, do not earn enough to afford the bare minimum of essentials of life from their wages alone.

It has been refreshing to see encouragement of support for small businesses as a result of this proposed change. As one friend said, "The wrong way to support small businesses is to advocate for them to underpay their workers, the positive way is to spend your money there." For many a farmer, this shift will require some restructuring and planning in order to account for this increased expenditure. For others this may mean working together more cooperatively with our neighbouring farmers. We will figure out a way, as we always do. It is a valuable asset to have a skilled person work alongside us in our fields and farms.

We stand together as farmers, farm workers, and members of our rural communities to look forward to positive changes to encourage the social, economic and food systems that will better recognize the important work of farmers. We hope that the eaters and others who support our farming operations will continue to do so and that any increase in price can be seen as a progressive move that will ensure a better quality of life for the farmers, both the business owners and anyone who works the farm.

—In Solidarity, Coral Sproule





# A message from the Youth

— by Ayla Fenton, NFU Youth President

## Dear NFU members,

The growing season here in Ontario is off to a slow start, with cool temperatures and record breaking rainfall and flooding preventing us from getting onto our fields. This comes right on the heels of 2016, which saw the worst drought in Eastern Ontario in nearly 120 years. The climate instability and unpredictability of weather patterns we have experienced over the past several years is a constant reminder of our urgent task – to rebuild more resilient farming systems.

A large part of this challenge, of course, is growing a successful new generation of farmers. The NFU is making a great contribution to this growth by consistently advocating for better policy, as well as by creating the networks new farmers need to succeed. In April, we held our annual youth retreat, a unique opportunity for young farmers from across the country to gather, share and learn from one another. In recent years, our youth retreats have grown rapidly and have provided an entry point for young aspiring farmers to get engaged and involved with the NFU. This work has paid off - in 2016 nearly one third of national convention-goers were youth and we now have active Youth Advisors in each NFU region.

This year, we kept the youth retreat smaller and more focused. Participants included the regional Youth Advisors, as well as youth members that are currently serving on the national board and executive. We were fortunate enough to have Aric McBay, an NFU-O Membership Development Coordinator, farmer and author, lead a workshop and discussion about the elements that make a successful social movement. We learned about the early organizing successes of the NFU, the effective community engagement of the prison farms campaign, and the leadership and collective actions of the United Farm Workers of America in the 1960's. It is crucial that we learn from the past and incorporate lessons from these successful movements into our work today.

We also discussed the idea that a productive critique of capitalism is essential to the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology. The pillars of the capitalist food system – concentration of market

power, vertical integration, exploitation of labour, and increasing corporate control of the resources required for food production – are completely at odds with the pillars of food sovereignty. The farm income crisis, food insecurity, diet-related disease epidemics, and the externalization of environmental destruction are all just symptoms of a deeper root problem.

This is the message I brought when I spoke on the closing plenary of the Canadian Association for Food Studies (CAFS) conference at the end of May. Hon. Lawrence McAulay, Minister of Agriculture, attended the conference to announce that the government will be starting consultations for a national food policy, so we were asked to offer perspectives on what this policy should look like.

The priority areas that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has outlined are:

- increasing access to affordable food;
- improving health and food safety;
- conserving our soil, water and air; and
- growing more high-quality food.

While these goals sound great on the surface, the idea of *safe* and *affordable* food is often used as a justification for policies that push small and medium-scale producers out of the game. I heard nothing in the Minister's speech about valuing food producers, regenerating the land, reducing food waste, or building food *sovereignty*. My message at the CAFS conference, as the only farmer in the room, was that a national food policy will do nothing to advance food sovereignty unless it challenges the capitalist structure of corporate control within our food system. This message was loudly applauded by the room full of academics but ignored or explicitly rejected by the government representatives present during the subsequent discussion.

The NFU and our allies will have to speak loud and clear during this consultation process if we want to be heard. As part of the consultation, an online survey is open until July 27 at [www.canada.ca/food-policy](http://www.canada.ca/food-policy). I urge all of you to add your voice.

—In Solidarity, Ayla Fenton



# Regional Reports



## Region One:

*Provinces of PEI, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia*

- by Reg Phelan, Coordinator



The NFU districts in Region One have been active on a number of issues. In Prince Edward Island, we are very concerned with what is happening with our land base. A lot of our land is being purchased by Asian interests and large corporations. The spirit and intent of The Lands Protection Act is constantly being eroded. We have met with the Premier, the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Environment and Lands, and all political parties. We have requested that the Island Regulatory and Appeals Commission do an investigation of this. There is a good video about the land issue by Don Kossick, titled *Islanders and the Land*. It can be downloaded from *youtube*.

There was a well-attended forum on Food Sovereignty and Climate Change organized by the Cooper Institute in March, 2017. Nettie Wiebe, past NFU National President, was a guest presenter. More than 80 people attended. More information about this and other events can be viewed on the NFU website, [www.nfu.ca](http://www.nfu.ca) and [www.nfunb.org](http://www.nfunb.org).

Blueberry growers in New Brunswick recently held a rally to show their disappointment about what is happening. Prices in the Maritimes are 10 to 15 % lower than elsewhere. Over a year ago, producers voted 84 % in favour of a marketing board proposal which the NB government has refused to implement.

The NB government is doing a review of legislation around new or expanding livestock operations. The NFU NB made a presentation with proposals from equitable legislation for existing and new farmers. In April, a large group of producers met outside the provincial legislature in Fredericton, NB to express their concerns.

In Nova Scotia, we continue to meet with the government about the issue of farm registration.

NFU members in NS are required to also join the Federation of Agriculture in order to participate in government programs. Our national president, Jan Slomp, met with the department there after speaking at the annual district meeting on PEI.

The NFU in PEI was approached by members of the Federation of Labour about working with the NFU on the supply management issue, nationally. There have been a couple of meetings on this.

The regional youth are planning a get together in PEI before the annual regional meeting on August 7 in Milton. Our national youth president, Ayla Fenton, plans to be here for both events. ■

## Région Two:

*Province of Québec*

- by Paul Slomp, Coordinator



Greetings from a very wet Region 2. Despite a dry 2016, the greater than normal snowfall followed by heavy rains this spring led to flooding in many parts of southern and western Québec in early May. Although many of the flood waters receded by early June, the ground remains saturated with water from almost-daily rains and showers and farmers are struggling to find their window-of-opportunity to put seeds in the ground. At the time of writing in early June, large numbers of fields, that under normal circumstances would have been planted almost a month ago, have yet to be seeded.

En avril, l'UNF a lancé un urgent appel à l'action pour que les individus soumettent leurs commentaires à l'Agence canadienne d'inspection des aliments (ACIA) quant aux modifications proposées aux réglementations relatives à la sécurité alimentaire. La réglementation cible un certain nombre de domaines tels les produits biologiques, la vente de légumes, les ventes directes aux

(continued on page 7...)



*(Region 2 Report, from page 6)*

consommateurs et les ventes dans les frontières provinciales. Nous avons mobilisé un certain nombre d'agricultrices et d'agriculteurs de la Région 2—des individus pour qui de ces changements auraient un grand impact—afin qu'elles et ils soumettent leurs commentaires à l'ACIA.

Recently, a small federally inspected abattoir in western Québec that served many smaller direct-to-consumer beef producers closed its doors (hopefully temporarily). Although the abattoir works with many beef producers in western Québec, their mainstay operation was the slaughter of horses from the US whose meat was then exported to Europe for human consumption. Recently the European Union imposed a six month quarantine on horses coming into Canada from the US for slaughter to allow for the

drugs administered to American horses to clear out of their systems before they are slaughtered. Keeping American horses in a feed lot for six months in Canada was not an economically viable option for the processor and they have decided to shutter the plant for the time being while they re-work their business plan. In the meantime, many of the region's beef producers who used the federally inspected abattoir to sell their beef across provincial borders are scrambling to find other options.

La Région 2 prévoit organiser notre première convention régionale pour un week-end vers la fin de septembre près de Les Cèdres, QC. Veuillez contacter Paul (paulslomp@gmail.com) si vous êtes intéressé ou voulez plus d'informations. ■

## NFU-O/Region Three:



*Province of Ontario*

*- by Emery Huszka, Coordinator*

**R**egion 3 is excited to announce that we are teaming up with local food advocates and influencers across the province to increase our capacity for consumer outreach, as we launch the Ontario Local Food Advocate Influencer Network to drive peer-to-peer promotion of local food. With financial support from the Government of Ontario, in partnership with the Greenbelt Fund, this program was developed to increase awareness and purchasing of the crops Ontario farmers are producing and to advance our vision for an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable agriculture industry in Ontario through local food promotion and consumer education.

We have always relied on farmers and farm organizations to self-promote and tell the good story that is behind Ontario's food, and with this project, we are flipping that model and connecting with local

food advocates and influencers who can reach out to their own communities directly. We will support them through developing the educational tools they need to promote a food system that benefits us all, and they will support us through advocating using their professional and social channels that they have already cultivated.

The Ontario Local Food Advocate Influencer Network will help to support key individuals through the assessment of existing communications activities and the development of new materials. Because of many direct-marketing members, the NFU is already an authority on local food production and the benefit of sustainable food systems; that knowledge is invaluable to influencers who are craving the farmer's side of the story.

This investment from the Greenbelt Fund speaks volumes to the importance of consumers in the equation of sustainability in Ontario agriculture. As an agricultural organization, this project gives us an incredible outreach capacity to eaters that we have never had before.

Through increasing communication between producer groups and consumer influencers, this project will start to develop shared narratives that are key to affecting long-term change in our food

*(continued on page 8...)*



*(Region 3 Report, from page 7)*

system and ultimately affect the viability of Ontario's agriculture industry. The Ontario Local Food Advocate Influencer Network will build trust and foster long-term, mutually beneficial relationships between those who grow food in Ontario and those who consume it.

"This is exactly the type of projects we are pleased to support through the Greenbelt Fund," said Burkhard Mausberg, CEO of the Greenbelt Fund. "We're using a small financial injection to help mobilize and support a larger group of individuals who have more capacity to affect change than we ever would."

***Here is how you can get involved and become a Network member:***

### **STEP 1: GET CONNECTED**

By completing our survey, you are getting connected with a network of people who are passionate about local food. From there, you will be offered the opportunity to get involved in the capacity that suits you, and will be kept in the loop as we move forward with the development of resources and toolkits informed by Network-member needs.

### **STEP 2: GET INVOLVED**

Network-members are coming together and expressing what they need to better communicate their passion for local food. With your input, through events in your area or online discussion platforms, the Network collective will decide the direction for resource creation and what tools can be created to better support your advocacy efforts.

### **STEP 3: GET SUPPORT**

Whether you get involved in the brainstorm and Network-member consultation process, you will have unlimited access to the materials that are available from Network partners and other members, as well as the new resources and tools that are being developed by Region 3 as a result of your input and feedback.

Do you know a local food influencer or advocate who would like to hear about our project? We would love to hear from you at any stage of the process. Do not hesitate to get in touch with the NFU-O team by contacting [communications@nfunontario.ca](mailto:communications@nfunontario.ca) or 1-888-832-9638 and visiting [nfunontario.ca](http://nfunontario.ca).



Possibility grows here.

## **The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing**

### **Award Criteria and Details:**

- There will be two age categories – 15 to 21 years old, and 22 to 30 years old. One award in the amount of \$500 will be awarded in each age category for a ***NON-FICTION OPEN LETTER*** 500-1000 words in length. **Applicants can only win once per age category.**
- **THIS YEAR'S THEME IS: WHAT DOES SOCIAL LICENSE MEAN TO YOU?**
- Deadline for entries is November 1, 2017.
- The winners will be announced at the NFU Convention in Ottawa, November 2017.
- All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.

### **Send entries to the National Farmers Union:**

By email: [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca), or by mail to:  
National Farmers Union, 2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6

*We will confirm that we received your email submission within a week. If you do not get a confirmation email, please resend your entry or phone the office at (306) 652-9465.*





## Region Five:

Province of Manitoba

- by Ian Robson, Coordinator



**N**ational Farmers Union Region 5 Manitoba Annual Convention was held at Portage La Prairie, Manitoba on March 30, 2017.

Member participation was good and discussions were fulsome and enjoyable. Usually the convention has been held in July, but we are considering March again for our next convention.

Guest speaker Dr. Gordon Goldsborough, Professor of Biological Sciences from the University of Manitoba, discussed the changing relationships between wetlands and farmland, the economic value of wetland conservation and the ALUS (Alternative Land Use Services) model of conservation. There is a recommendation that there be no net loss of class 3 wetlands since these wetlands are very important to natural processes.

Darrin Qualman, Project Coordinator for the Manitoba NFU Greenhouse Gas and Climate Change Report, joined the meeting by skype. Despite funding delays triggered by the Manitoba government, the NFU continues to make progress on our climate change report which is a comprehensive plan to help farmers reduce greenhouse gas emissions from our farms. Our report will be unique in that it will connect the climate crisis and the farm income crisis by demonstrating how on-farm changes, triggered by the need to deal with climate change, can also help farmers improve their net incomes.

Jan Slomp, NFU President, also joined the meeting by Skype and spoke about young farmers, the challenges the NFU takes on to protect and rebuild farmer-first policies, the need for farmers to discuss difficult issues and the need to find common ways to help each other gain from the market. There is concern over railway grain transportation issues and the need to do a proper costing review of the Maximum Revenue Entitlement formula to keep farmers from being overcharged for freight. There is also a need for producer cars and for the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) to continue to work "in the

interest of farmers". An NFU delegation met with the newly appointed CGC Commissioners to encourage proper licensing, bonding and producer services. NFU is concerned about the large deductions made by elevator companies.

There are threats to supply management from within Canada from politicians who do not understand market power effects. An over paid university professor may think expanding dairy production would help the economy, but farmers look after the Canadian market while the world has surplus milk. Following the meeting we note that the overproduction of milk in the USA is causing big losses to the US farmers. *(Good work President Slomp for tweeting to President Trump to explain how Canada could export the idea of supply management which would help make rural America great again — our Canadian Trade Minister needs to take note and not give up our strong position.)*

NFU supports the grain cheque deferral program. NFU is collecting farmer experiences of grain grading and selling at delivery and will make a report.

Dean Harder and Ian Robson met with Manitoba Agriculture Minister, Hon. Ralph Eichler and asked him to give Manitoba farmers the choice of legislated farm voice between KAP and NFU as is done in Ontario. The Minister has tabled minor legislative changes which enhance KAP as the only legislated farm voice in Manitoba, but the NFU continues to hope for legislated relief for farmers' diverse views which would strengthen the farm voice and improve farming. Region 5 membership development work is continuing.

At the Region 5 Annual Convention Ian Robson and Dean Harder were re-elected to the National Board. Dean has been very active in connecting farmers to the Union and introducing new farmers. Jeanette Sivilay was elected to serve on both the NFU Youth Advisory Committee and the International Program Committee. Lois Robson was elected to the NFU Women's Advisory Committee.

Please send us your comments and your concerns and please contact other farmers and supporters to invite them to join the NFU. Resolution ideas are always needed and can be considered. ■





## Region Six:

*Province of Saskatchewan*

*- by Rachelle Ternier, Coordinator*

This spring, I eagerly awaited the growth of my fall planted garlic, but no matter how patiently I waited, it did not show up. Thankfully, I also spring planted all my varieties and they started to grow, but still no sign of the fall planted. Eventually, deciding to dig up a few cloves, I discovered they were opaque from having been frozen. No life left in them. About a month later, my Dad had a conversation with a staff member at the local farm and garden centre in Saskatoon and she said much of the fall planted garlic had not survived the winter here in Saskatchewan. There were farms that lost a couple acres of fall planted garlic...! In addition, people have said many of the usually hardy perennials also died off last winter. Speculation says this either came from the cold hard temperatures before we had a decent snow fall, or the exceedingly warm days in the winter which melted all the snow and were then followed by cold winter days. This is an example of one of the challenges we now need to accommodate in our farm plans in terms of climate.

Here in Saskatchewan, our provincial government released a budget in late March that had detrimental effects on rural Saskatchewan. This has many people upset and rallying against it. They have closed down our publicly owned province-wide bus service that has operated for 70 years. They cut all provincial library funding by over 50% (reversed for now, due to public outcry) and they are selling off the Saskatchewan Grain Car Corporation rail cars and 780,000 acres of crown land that was managed by the Saskatchewan Pastures Program. The provincial government has taken over control of school board budgets, raised education taxes and cut funding to schools, colleges and universities. Towns and cities lost millions of dollars in grants, traditionally paid in place of taxes by SaskPower and SaskEnergy, and they have had to raise taxes and cut services to make up for the lost revenue. Many rural people have realized what these cuts mean and are not pleased. NFU Region 6 has joined a coalition of

groups called, *Stop the Cuts*. See [www.stopthecutssk.ca](http://www.stopthecutssk.ca) for more information. Former NFU President Terry Boehm was a speaker at the coalition's well-attended rally on April 27 in Saskatoon.

Our Region 6 Convention will take place in Saskatoon at the end of June. We will be gathering to watch the documentary film *Reserve 107* on the Tuesday evening of our two-day convention, followed by a panel discussion to expand the conversation beyond the story of the film. In addition, we plan to have conversations around public land holding models and brainstorm about how we can work to prevent the sell off of public lands and prevent the continuing consolidation of farmland ownership.

A diversity of farm types responded to our convention planning committee's survey of members. We wanted to gain a sense of what is important for our members in the context of our Regional Convention and in terms of issues that affect members. The feedback we got was very interesting. The issues members feel affect them the most are:

1. Land issues such as control, ownership, tenure, succession, commodification/ decommodification;
2. Soil issues such as erosion, fertility, soil carbon, soil health and;
3. Seed issues such as GMO alfalfa, End Point Royalties, plant breeding research, agricultural biodiversity, community versus corporate control of seed.

The same five options were given again with the question, which do you feel the need to learn more about, and the results were highest for *Understanding colonization, decolonization and farmer-First Nations relationships, including our treaty responsibilities*. This survey has given us some insight into what is important for our members. We also asked many other questions to help us better understand our members. If you are from Region 6 and would like to still fill out the survey, you are not too late as we have sent it in the mail to members for return at our convention and the link to fill it out online is also still active. ■



## Region Eight:

Peace River District of  
Alberta & the Province of BC

- by Peter Eggers, Coordinator



**M**ost farmers finished seeding by June 7 in the Peace River district. First there was harvest to finish, in some cases that happened the first week of June. The crop might not be saleable but there is a lot of conflicting information from all good to really bad. Seeding was interrupted by rain twice in May. Some crops got mudded in and some seeded very late.

This also shows how vulnerable we as farmers are. To meet financial need or commitments, farmers in the Peace River District seed mostly wheat and canola with a little barley, oats and peas. The last three need less time to mature. We used to have Polish canola which took only 90 days and gave almost always top quality. But since the advent of patented seed and the corporate takeover of the seed business, Polish canola, and almost all of the open pollinated canola, disappeared. So what started out as more options ended up limiting options. It was probably Roundup herbicide which made it such a success.

When I look at the fallout from all this I identify two significant things. On the farm equipment side, farmers were forced or chose to drastically increase the size of their seeder and possibly their tractor to meet the need to get the later maturing crops seeded in time. It used to only be wheat that we were concerned about but now we have added canola. That required large capital outlay. To break-even you also need a good to very good yield. And over the last few years I have seen far more problems with quality than in the 80's and 90's. So what happened to enhance the bottom line of the patent holder seems to have resulted in the farmer holding the majority of the risk.

There might be more issues on the horizon. German dairy processors just announced that there will be no more genetically modified organism (GMO) content in German milk or milk products. You might ask what that has to do with Region 8? Almost all European livestock get their protein from soya or soya meal from North and South America, some of which is from GM soybeans. It is the biggest market for those products

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We will now be placing a limited number of advertisements in the UFQ. The cost will be \$125 per issue for business card size ads and \$300 per issue for quarter page ads. **The deadline to receive ads for the fall issue of the UFQ is August 15.** The print copies should start to hit mailboxes around the middle of September.

**Please send your advertisements to:**

**Joan Lange, NFU office, at [lange@nfu.ca](mailto:lange@nfu.ca)  
and to**

**Ann Slater, Chair of the NFU Editorial Advisory  
Committee at [aslater@quadro.net](mailto:aslater@quadro.net)**

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and Germany is Europe's largest dairy producer. Their farmers will be forced to source protein supplement at home. They might not be able to find enough but it might actually help them. Because milk prices are below the cost of production, and if milk production falls because of this, the price might improve. But now to the implication to Region 8 and the rest of Canada. It could be like a warning signal - grow what the market wants. I suspect this might have price implications on soya and possible canola if the meal market shrinks.

This brings me to the last point of this report. We have been thinking about a pledge were we as farmers sign that we will not grow genetically modified alfalfa. If you all could participate and sign the pledge we might be able to pressure the regulator to retract the permission to release GM alfalfa. The instructions and the letter to sign will be posted on the NFU website. We will have to reach as many as possible to create an impact as this is very important for Canadian society as a whole.

We have to reach out to our non-member neighbours with this pledge. Please look for it and fill it out once it is available. ■



# Cultivating a Culture of Curiosity

## Farmer-led Research in Ontario

- by Sarah Hargreaves, PhD

If you farm, there is no doubt you are hardworking and independent and also curious and creative: the making of a researcher, whether you know it or not! So, what are you curious about on your farm? Your list of questions is likely long: ideas from other regions, an observation from last year, tweaks of a neighbour's practice, a well-guided hunch. Where do you start?!

The conventional model would have you seek help from the formal agricultural research and development sector. But for farmers using alternative practices or growing on small acreage, there is often a disconnect. One approach to circumvent this disconnect is farmer-led research. Farmer-led research is a bottom-up approach to creating farming knowledge - a paradigm shift from traditional agricultural sciences and how they translate into sustainable agriculture and natural resource management.

Farmer-led research is effective because it is strongly rooted in one of agriculture's founding approaches: *Campesino a Campesino* or farmer-to-farmer information sharing. Farmers' most trusted source of information is other farmers and farmer-led research builds from this. It supports an existing culture within farming communities that values farmers' knowledge and evidence-based information (1). Analyses of farmer-led research networks in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and New Zealand show that locally appropriate technical innovations emerge from farmer-led research and are readily taken up by other farmers; the local capacity to innovate is strengthened; and livelihood benefits are broad and substantial (1,2).

In North America, a notable example of farmer-led research in North America is Practical Farmers of Iowa's Cooperators' Program ([practicalfarmers.org/farmer-knowledge](http://practicalfarmers.org/farmer-knowledge)). For over 35 years, hundreds of farmers have conducted over a thousand farmer-led research trials and fostered transformative change to the landscape. In large part because of farmer-led research, the number of cover crop acres in Iowa has increased from fewer than

10,000 acres in 2009 to about 600,000 acres in 2016 (3). At Practical Farmers' field days, where on-farm research is shared freely with participants, 98% of attendees reported a change in knowledge and 98% plan to share what they have learned. Of these, 81% reported considering making changes to production practices, 62% report thinking of changes to business management practices, and 73% report thinking of changes to conservation practices.

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Farmer-led research is effective because it is strongly rooted in one of agriculture's founding approaches:  
*Campesino a Campesino* or farmer-to-farmer information sharing.

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Within the Ecological Farmers Association of Ontario (EFAO) - a membership-based organization established in 1979 with over 500 members across Ontario - farmers expressed a need for research networks to generate evidence-based information on diversified, ecological, and organic farms. To meet this need, the EFAO launched a farmer-led research program in 2016 ([efao.ca/farmer-led-research](http://efao.ca/farmer-led-research)). Modeled after the Cooperators' Program and funded by the Ontario Trillium Foundation and a Seeding Food Innovations grant from the Weston Foundation, the program provides training and logistical and financial support for member farmers across Ontario to conduct rigorous trials for their farms. Decisions around research foci are anchored in EFAO members' Research Priorities ([efao.ca/research-details](http://efao.ca/research-details)) and narrowed by an Advisory Panel comprised of eight farmers, one academic partner, and one agricultural non-profit partner. At every step, care is taken to ensure underlying principles of farmer-led research are embraced and practiced by all staff and at all levels within the EFAO (2).

(continued on page 13...)



In its first year, 11 farmers conducted 13 trials ranging from evaluation of soil health indicators, cover crops for vegetable production, and breed comparison for raising chickens on pasture. This year, 13 farmer-researchers are working on 13 trials related to organic pest management, probiotics for pasture-raised chickens, interplanting for vegetable production, green mulches, seed saving techniques, and locally adapted vegetable varieties. All of the trials include at least four replicates, and farmers learn the important aspects of randomization, monitoring, analysis, and reporting of results. Farmer-researchers will meet at the end of the year, in conjunction with the Ecological Farmers of Ontario Conference in Blue Mountains, to discuss results from this year's trials and start the planning process for next year. Research protocols and research reports, along with links to past webinars and other resources, can be found at the EFAO's online Research Library ([efao.ca/research-library](http://efao.ca/research-library)).

The EFAO's program is starting small and scaling out gradually, with a focus on stimulating the culture of curiosity in the farming community. This gives time to find sustainable funding models that do not constrain the flexibility and creativity of farmer-researchers; find networks of scientists to share their knowledge and skills; help build farmers' capacity and credibility as researchers; and work out considerations such as intellectual property rights (2). In the end, farmer-led research has the potential to catalyze a virtuous circle: farmers learning from other farmers to be researchers; farmers sharing information with other farmers to make evidence-based decisions; these decisions and actions begging further questions and research projects; and so on.

Engaging farmers in evidence-based on-farm research has a rich history in Ontario, which accelerated with the formation of the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) in 1939. The OSCIA's commitment to engaging farmers in on-farm research continues today, "although staff resources and budgets are more limited than in previous decades,"

says Harold Rudy, the organization's Executive Officer, Research and Business Development.

User-driven research and co-production of solutions is also strongly represented in Ontario and across the country by participatory plant breeding programs such as the Bauta Family Initiative on Canadian Seed Security. Staff positions in government agencies, such as the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, also help support on-farm research, although dedicated extension services are lacking in Canada. The distinction between this support and farmer-led research programs is a specific focus on training and support for farmers as independent researchers. To our knowledge, program support to specifically train farmers to answer their own research questions is new in Canada, and in addition to the EFAO's program there are beginnings of other farmer-led research programs with PEI Organics.

Whether you are curious about cover crops or pest management or feed efficiency, there is a chance farmer-led research may offer an efficient way to answer the question or gain new insights. It is not for everyone, every farm or every question. But it is a powerful decision-making tool that can also energize your community, and an essential part of the overall fabric of a transformative, sustainable agriculture. Visit EFAO's website for more information on how you can join or support farmer-led research efforts in Ontario ([efao.ca](http://efao.ca)). ■

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**Sarah Hargreaves** is the Program Manager for Ecological Farmers Association Ontario's Farmer-led Research Program. She holds a PhD in soil microbial ecology from Iowa State University. While in Iowa, she was involved with Practical Farmers of Iowa and saw firsthand the power of farmer-led research as a flexible tool that empowers farmers to innovate in economical and ecological ways. When she is not working with EFAO, you can find Sarah farming diversified perennial crops and pasture-raised livestock with her family near Aylmer, Ontario. Sarah is an NFU member and can be contacted at [sarah@efao.ca](mailto:sarah@efao.ca).



# Introductions to Two Regional Representatives

## International Program Committee Region 6 (SK) Representative



– Dixie Green

**D**ixie has been involved with farm work and working to support a farm since 1972 when she bought into a partnership and developed a mixed farm with irrigation from the city's

effluent and a cow-calf operation. The family farm operation helped to develop a good work ethic in her four children and taught them diverse life skills. The family became members of the NFU and worked to support policies that helped the small farmer. Rhonda, Dixie's daughter, was the Youth Vice President and travelled to Ontario and Grenada. Her son, Mathew, travelled to Andover, New Brunswick and learned the hard work and politics of the McCain dominated potato industry. Dixie has been involved locally with Region 6 and has served as a National Board member. In 2016 Dixie attended the World Social Forum in Montreal, representing the IPC and the NFU.

Dixie has always worked off the farm as a mental health professional. She is aware of the social inequities and on-going struggles for justice. Dixie finds the NFU one of the few organizations interested in supporting women, youth and small land-based farmers. Today, she manages a small cow-calf operation and grows durum, red wheat, mustard and/or lentils in rotation. ■

## Region 6 (SK) Youth Advisory Member

– Christopher Sanford Beck

**C**hristopher Sanford Beck lives with his family on a small scale, chemical free, mixed farm near Cochin, Saskatchewan. The farm is predominately food self sufficient (meat, eggs, often milk, grain, vegetables) and its primary source of income comes from running a CSA, which serves the local area. Though Christopher is not a full time gardener or farmer, food issues are close to his heart. Before moving to join the Ternier/Burns farm, he and his family lived in Saskatoon, where his mother was an avid gardener and the program director at CHEP Good Food Inc. Christopher is new to the NFU, having been initiated to the organization at the Region 6 convention in 2016, where he was selected to become youth adviser. He is still learning what that role entails, but he hopes that his passion for writing, social issues, and food can come in handy. Christopher is currently homeschooling and although he is unsure where life will lead him, he wants food and food justice to remain a part of his life. ■



## Consider Running for an Elected Position in Your Region

*As we continue to introduce the NFU members who serve as elected members, we would like to encourage our members to consider standing for an elected position within the organization, and be part of the very rewarding work of shaping the direction of the NFU. Regional Board representatives, International Program Committee representatives and Advisory positions are elected at your Regional Conventions. Why not consider what role you can play in working to address the issues that are important in your region and to family farmers across Canada!*



# Introduction to the new IPC Coordinator



**C**arla Fehr has recently been hired as the part-time coordinator of the NFU International Program Committee (IPC).

This position, made possible through funding from Inter Pares, involves coordinating the work of the International Program Committee as it builds up the

NFU's involvement in global food system issues that shape the daily reality for farmers in Canada and around the world. The IPC has identified that *agroecology* and *climate justice from below* will be the main focus of their work this year, along with ongoing work around Indigenous solidarity and migrant agricultural workers.

An important part of IPC work is to take advantage of opportunities for NFU members to participate in events and campaigns with La Via Campesina, a global movement of peasant farmers who seek to promote justice through defending the viability and dignity of small-scale agriculture. Three members from the NFU will take part in La Via Campesina's 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference to be held July 16-24, 2017 in the Basque Country.

Carla's interest in social justice and the global food system led her to studies in international development and history at the University of Saskatchewan. Her master's thesis focused on The

## Migrant Worker Committee

The International Program Committee (IPC) is looking for more **NFU members to join the Migrant Worker Committee.**

This committee seeks to extend and deepen the NFU's understanding of migrant worker issues by providing information to members, offering recommendations to the National Board on policy matters related to migrant workers, and providing a forum for members to share resources and learn together.

The committee meets at least four times a year, via conference calls.

**If you are interested in joining, please contact:**

**Carla Fehr (IPC Coordinator) at  
[ipccoordinator@nfu.ca](mailto:ipccoordinator@nfu.ca)**

Economist magazine's promotion of capitalist agriculture in 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain and its long-lasting effects on agriculture today. Her research contributed to the 2010 book, *Food Sovereignty: Reconnecting Food, Nature and Community*. Carla grew up on a grain farm in Saskatchewan but now lives in Saskatoon with her partner and two children. She has been an associate member of the NFU for eleven years. ■

## NFU Region 7 (Alberta) Convention

**DATE: Saturday, July 29, 2017**

**LOCATION: Waskatenau, Alberta**

★ *Pig Roast supper*

★ *Bus tour of the historic Victoria Trail – oldest known continued use trail in Canada.*

**Convention call and more information will be in Region 7 mailboxes soon!!**



# Deepening Our Understanding of Policy Issues

## *Inspiring Conversations in Our Communities*

Over the past year and a half, the NFU Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) has been focusing on how to better support NFU members activities at a grassroots level. By ensuring that members have an opportunity to engage in activities that are taking place, we are building capacity within the organization to engage in educated discussion about agricultural issues with media, with potential members, or with customers at the farmers' market.

What the SPC came up with, to help do this work, was the idea of creating support materials for members to host Kitchen Table Meetings. These materials would, in their simplest form, be a single page guide that introduces a policy issue and follows with some questions to help provoke discussion. This simple act of discussing our policies at a deeper level in our communities is the key step in a healthy democratic system. The thinking behind the Kitchen Table Meetings is that if we can invite people to such gatherings to talk about issues that are affecting us, as farmers, regionally and nationally, this will facilitate recruiting new members. It will also make it easier for members to better understand NFU policies and processes and how we can, as individuals, use the Union to bring forward our issues.

The interactive session that took place at the 47th NFU Annual Convention in November, 2016 was an introduction to the work of the Strategic Planning Committee, as well as a starting point for the committee to explore how a facilitated discussion may work. Paul Slomp, SPC Chair at the time, led the session. He was assisted by Hilary Moore, then 1st VP (Policy). When considering what issue to use for this debut, collective bargaining seemed like an ideal topic, somewhat inspired by the NFU report that was released earlier in the year, called *Strengthening Supply Management - Defending Canadian control of our market space and advancing food sovereignty*. The title for the session was "An Introduction to Kitchen

Table Talks: Can Supply Management Provide a Living for All Family Farms?" A provocative subject was chosen for this panel session at Convention, to provide insight and experience to the SPC as they continue to develop ways to support members in their efforts to understand the larger picture and inspire conversations in farming communities.

During the interactive session, all people in the room were asked to go to the back, where Paul then selected roughly 20 people, who were asked to form a line. Each person took on the role of a dairy producer looking to sell their glass of milk. The cost of production was 60 cents. Paul then went through a list of yes or no questions. Each person in the line was to move one step to the left or right, depending on their answer (relevant to their own real life situation). The intent of this exercise was to showcase the array of 'power' (i.e. advantage) that various farmers have in the market place. The questions Paul asked were mostly related to marketing, such as distance to urban centres of 10,000 plus people; use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter; having a

*(continued on page 17...)*



*Photo: Paul Slomp (left) leads interactive session at NFU Annual Convention, November 2016.*





*(Deeping Our Understanding of Policy Issues, from page 16)*

website; and direct marketing to customers. Other questions involved debt load and land ownership. When all the questions had been read those farmers nearest to the right had the most marketing power (given 80 cents/glass of milk) and those nearest to the left had the least (given 40 cents/glass of milk). The folks in the middle, which was the majority, received 60 cents/glass of milk, which equaled the cost of production.

Paul then gave the participants some questions to discuss:

- Who benefited in this scenario and why?
- Who lost in this scenario and why?
- What brought the farmers at the extreme ends to the extreme ends?

On the “high marketing power” end, one participant attributed the capacity to build relationships with customers as the reason for success. On the lower end, buying a farm away from the city, well as being a grain farmer, were the deemed reasons for his low marketing capacity. Other observations that came from the discussion included that: the most aggressive marketing brought on the best price, farmers are often *price takers* instead of *price makers* and that perhaps the questions should not have carried equal weight of importance.

In the second part of the exercise, a “buyer” was introduced to the dairy producers. The dairy producers had to work together to come up with a price that they would negotiate as a collective, which they started at \$2.40/glass. The buyer and the collective then proceeded to negotiate until the purchase price was set at \$1.20/glass of milk. Who benefited? Who lost?



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In reflecting on the exercise, Paul admitted that he was surprised at the outcome of the demonstration. Several questions arose out of the convention exercise. For one, is it worth the sacrifice of a couple of farmers who could do well without a collective agreement, so that the majority can get a better individual price? Would we have seen a different outcome if the questions been weighted differently? We can expand the conversation to compare the effectiveness of collective marketing versus the effectiveness of direct marketing and some of the complexities around both avenues as well as their relationship with each other. ■

*Note: At the NFU Board Meeting following the 2016 National Convention, the NFU Board changed the name of the Strategic Planning Committee to the Membership Development Committee. At the same time, the NFU Board named a Strategic Planning Working Group to lead the Strategic Planning process for the NFU and the development of an NFU Strategic Plan.*



# Time to get Out from Under

- by David Orchard

**W**ith the 28th anniversary of the Canada-US Free Trade Agreement (FTA) approaching and NAFTA turning 23, these agreements remain largely unknown to most Canadians, including our politicians.

For instance, in energy, Canada gave the United States the right to take the same proportion of all forms of Canada's energy, in perpetuity, that it was taking in the previous three years, even if Canada itself goes short, and Canada could no longer use a two-price system to benefit our producers.

NAFTA gives US and Mexican corporations the right to sue Canada for any law or regulation they think contravenes the spirit of NAFTA and causes them "loss or damage." So far, Canada has been sued 35 times by US corporations, reversed several of our laws, paid US corporations \$200 million in NAFTA fines — and faces claims for over \$6 billion more. The US has not lost a single case.

Canada also agreed to treat American corporations and citizens as if they were Canadians ("national treatment"), and we have seen the takeover of thousands of Canadian companies by US corporations, including Eaton's, Hudson's Bay, Stelco, Tim Hortons, Massey Ferguson, and both our national railways, CN and CP.

In the lead-up to the FTA farmers were promised that agriculture would not even be part of the talks. In the final agreement, agriculture is its longest chapter with over 100 commitments to "harmonize" (defined as "making identical") the agricultural sectors of Canada and the US.

Before the FTA, Canada's major meat processors were Canadian owned. After a decade under the FTA the beef processing industry was in US hands. Market analyst Keith Greer noted, "The Canadian meat industry is really an American industry."<sup>i</sup> As for the promised big new market for Canadian hogs, today after almost thirty years of "free trade", we have roughly as many pigs in Canada as one hundred



years ago, and less than two per cent as many farms producing them.

The Canadian Wheat Board was the world's largest marketer of wheat and barley, a major Canadian success story with seven billion in sales annually. It was given to a US-Saudi agri-business giant for nothing but a promise of "future investment," leaving the majority of Canada's grain industry foreign owned.

Now responding to the US demand to end Canada's supply management in dairy and its imposition of tariffs on Canadian soft wood lumber, the Canadian government promptly agreed to "sit down and talk." What exactly will it talk about? After the FTA, deputy US Trade Representative, William Merkin, said, "Canada came into the negotiations at a real disadvantage. It was viewed in Washington as the petitioner." After the signing of the agreement, US Trade Representative, Clayton Yeutter, said, "The Canadians don't understand what they've signed. In twenty years they will be sucked into the US economy." Our government is once again taking the position of supplicant, asking to keep NAFTA and agreeing to "re-negotiate" it.

Our access to the US market was greater before we entered the FTA and NAFTA. Since its founding in 1948 we traded with the US through the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade), now called the WTO, until Canada entered the FTA. During all those years the US was unable to impose tariffs on our lumber, achieve control of our energy, damage our dairy industry, destroy the Canadian Wheat Board, or allow its corporations to sue us.

The FTA and NAFTA can both be terminated without penalty, with a simple six months notice, and our trade relationship with the US would

*(continued on page 19...)*



*(Time to get out from under, from page 18)*

immediately snap back to WTO rules under which we have much more strength. In this multilateral forum with 163 other member countries the US cannot use its power in the way it can, and does, against Canada in bilateral, one on one agreements.

Norway, a fellow oil exporter, voted to remain outside the European Union (EU). Today it has no debt, no deficit, free university education, a dental plan, rich social programmes, and a one trillion dollar surplus. Canada, with far more resources, could do the same, and more, if we take back control of our country.

Our country needs to give the US notice and then withdraw from the FTA and NAFTA, abandon its supplicant posture and build our economy, including

our agriculture, from a position of strength. Canada's founders planned an independent nation that would compete with our southern neighbor, never be taken over by it. We are headed down the road to becoming the world's largest colony and need to change direction before its too late. The opportunity is now!

—DAVID ORCHARD is the author of *The Fight for Canada: Four Centuries of Resistance to American Expansionism*.  
He farms at Borden, Saskatchewan.  
He can be reached at [davidorchard@sasktel.net](mailto:davidorchard@sasktel.net)

i Editor's Note: XL Beef, a major beef processor in Canada, is currently owned by JBS, a Brazilian Company.



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*See page 22 for more information and how to apply.*



# Prison Farm Advisory Panel Named

- by Tony Straathof

Canada's Prison Farm system was developed in the 1960's. For 50 years it was the model for prisoner rehabilitation and for providing perishable and staple foods for the prison system. In 2010, the government of the day closed the prison farms despite active protests and rejected public consultations. The government had assessed that it was a costly way to produce food and there were more cost effective ways to procure those staple foods. As well, they determined the skills learned by the prisoners were not transferable to the outside world after the prisoners' sentences were complete.

Members of the NFU were very active in leading the protests and calling for public consultations leading up to the prison farm closures, even buying back some of the cows. In August, 2016 the public consultation did occur through an initiative of the new federal government. The results of that consultation lead to the creation of the Prison Farm Advisory Panel in May, 2017.

The results of the consultation challenged the government that the closures were based on errors of perception. In 2010, the government claimed that prisoners were not learning employable skills at the farm, referring to the ability to milk cows and care for farm animals. However, the real skills learned were the skills needed for employment such as consistently arriving on time for work, respecting coworkers and the management team, and ensuring that the task given was completed. Working with animals is very therapeutic and is an aid to rehabilitation. In the past, prison farms were developed as an effective means of rehabilitation and reintegration for prisoners in a minimum security institution. That did not change from when the farms were created to now, but what did change was the government's assessment of the role of the farms. The consultation process did point out the error in the government's reasoning for proposing the closures in 2010. The advisory panel is tasked with investigating the feasibility of reopening the



prison farm at Kingston. The advisory panel consists of seven members with a wide variety of backgrounds: farm, business, community advocacy, prisoner reform, education and more. Three of the panel members are NFU members that were involved with the prison farm issue since the closures were first announced. Meetings will begin in mid-June and it is hoped the panel will complete their work within a year. ■

## **Members of the Prison Farm Advisory Panel:**

### **Dianne Dowling**

*President NFU Local 316 (Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox-Addington)*

### **Jeff Peters**

*Chair Pen Farm Herd Co-op, Director NFU Local 316 (Kingston, Frontenac and Lennox-Addington)*

### **Tony Straathof**

*Director, NFU-Ontario, Renfrew County*

### **Bridget Doherty**

*Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul, Kingston*

### **Catherine Latimer**

*Executive Director, John Howard Society of Canada, Kingston*

### **Alex Ross**

*Kingston school board trustee, vice-president KEYS Job Centre, Kingston*

### **Bruce Vandenberg**

*Goat and sheep farmer, cheese processor, Lindsay*



# Farming in a Changing Climate

The closing panel at the NFU Convention regularly features farmers talking about their own operations through the lens of the convention theme. The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual NFU Convention in Saskatoon in November, 2016 was no different. The Saturday afternoon panel was titled *Farming in a Changing Climate* and featured four farmers from across the country – Chris Wooding from Eastern Ontario, Iain Aitken from Manitoba, Shannon Jones from Nova Scotia, and Don Voss from Saskatchewan. Three of the four panelists are relatively new to their current farms, either as new farmers or as farmers in a new location.

Chris Wooding has been farming at Ironwood Organics in Eastern Ontario for eight years. Along with growing landrace cereals and a variety of other annual and perennial crops, Chris is the miller at the Old Stone Mill, a National Historic Site, in Delta, Ontario. Predictions for his area suggest that the climate will become warmer on average, with more extended periods of drought, and more significant rainfall events, with more instances of a month's

worth of rain, or more, falling in one day. One of the strategies Chris is employing on his farm is to look at growing different things – in his case looking at what is growing now in North Carolina, as that is where his climate is going to be in the future. This has meant planting trees like hickories as he replants his hedgerows and experimenting with trees like hazelnut and pecan in his nut orchard.

During his presentation, Chris highlighted the importance of hedgerows in helping to mitigate the impacts of climate change on his farm. Hedgerows help modulate climate extremes at the farm or micro-climate level by slowing the winds, warming the cold, cooling the hot and keeping snow on the fields. In addition, hedgerows are key to increasing the biodiversity on the farm, whether that be through planting a diversity of trees in the hedgerow, providing a space for wild plants to grow or creating a home for wildlife. Wildlife, such as insect-eating birds, which dwell in the hedgerows

*(continued on page 22...)*



Panelists: (left to right) Iain Aitken, Shannon Jones, Chris Wooding and Don Voss.



*(Farming in a Changing Climate, from page 21)*

benefit the farm by eating insect pests. Along with other panelists, Chris also noted the importance of supporting soil life, suggesting that his primary crop is actually "all the stuff in the soil".

Although he is not new to farming, Iain Aitken is farming in a new climate, having moved his cow/calf operation from the Rimbey, Alberta area to the Belmont area in south-west Manitoba in 2015. This was not his first move. In 2000, he moved from a multi-generational beef and sheep farm in south-west Scotland to Alberta. He raises Luing cattle, a breed he has found most resilient in his grass-based production system.

Throughout his farming career, Iain and his family have relied on low-cost, low-risk, low-input, grass-based systems using minimal machinery to raise cattle. He highlighted the importance of water and the water cycle on the farm, in particular, the need to hold onto the water that falls on the farm rather than having it run-off. In his experience, a key way to restore the water cycle on the farm is to stop overgrazing which compacts the soil and leads to a self-inflicted drought every year. In his operation, cattle only graze each area once or twice a year, even though he strives to have the cattle on pasture from April until December, or longer. He said one potential advantage of climate change could be a longer growing season, making it easier to have something growing every day.

Shannon Jones and her partner Bryan own and operate Broadfork Farm in River Herbert, Nova Scotia with the majority of their income coming from annual vegetables produced for local markets. Both Shannon and Bryan are first generation farmers and Shannon described herself as a new farmer. As the farm is their only source of income, Shannon and Bryan think about risk management all the time and climate change is a risk. They also think a lot about keeping the soil covered. This can be a challenge with annual vegetable production but they are continually trialling options like crimping, mowing, and untilled pathways. Shannon also spoke about the value of adaptation through seeds. Each year they save more and more of their own seeds, in an effort to develop seeds that are adapted to their particular farm. In closing her presentation,

Shannon noted the need for a diversity of solutions and strategies when it comes to farming in a changing climate, and the importance of always trying something new on our farms.

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...Don described himself and others in the room as survivors – as farmers challenged by the climate, he said that we can all rest assured that we will find a way.

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The final panelist was Don Voss, who runs a mixed cattle and grain farm with his wife Carolyn and son Ben, in the Glenbush-Belbute area near Spiritwood, north-western Saskatchewan. In his opening comments, Don noted that he has been farming for fifty years and has had a lot of fun doing it. He also said that the climate in his area has never been especially good and that the topography is rolling and the ground stony (in his words there are no single stones on his farm, they are all married with big families) but they have only had one drought in fifty years. In 2008, when the oil companies decided to squeeze a lot of money out of farmers by increasing the price of diesel, Don and his family decided to experiment with producing their own biofuels by pressing farm-grown canola to produce fuel to run their diesel equipment. His decision to move into on-farm biofuel production came mostly from a desire to be more independent and to buck the system. He said that to be economically viable 10 litres of diesel has to equal the price of one bushel of canola. In terms of using farm-pressed fuel, he described the options from burning a fairly high percentage of canola oil plus diesel in older machinery to converting canola oil to biodiesel, which requires further processing, including the removal of the glycerines. In closing, Don described himself and others in the room as survivors – as farmers challenged by the climate, he said that we can all rest assured that we will find a way. ■



# NFU CONVENTION BURSARY PROGRAM

**BACK FOR A SECOND YEAR !!** A Convention Bursary Fund has been set up to encourage participation at National Convention by reducing financial barriers. **NFU members** who are first-time convention goers may apply for a bursary. The bursaries will be funded by voluntary contributions from you, our Family Farm and Associate members. The Convention 2017 Planning Committee will select the bursary recipients from the eligible applicants.

**Would you like to contribute to the Bursary Fund?** You are invited to contribute to the bursary fund. The money will be used to help first-time convention goers pay for their transportation, accommodation, food and if applicable, registration fees. You will be recognized as a contributor on the NFU website, in the convention program and the post-convention UFQ. If you prefer to contribute anonymously, that is okay too. Please mail your cheque or call the national office with your credit card information by September 15.

**Would you like to apply for a Bursary? If you are an NFU member and have never attended a National Convention, you are eligible to apply.** Please fill in the application form below, and send it in to the National Office by October 1. If you are selected, you will be notified by October 15 and your bursary will be paid at the end of Convention. After Convention you will be asked to write a thank-you note to the contributor(s) and send in a short reflection on your convention experience that we will publish. If you prefer to do this anonymously, we will not publish your name if requested. **Not an NFU member yet?** Fill out the application on the back page of this *Quarterly* and mail it in, or go to <http://store.nfu.ca/membership.html> .

**Application for NFU Convention Bursary**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ NFU Membership Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/Town: \_\_\_\_\_ Province: \_\_\_\_\_ Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (        ) \_\_\_\_\_

Seeking bursary of  \$250  \$500 (check one)

Please say a few words about why you would like to receive this bursary and attend the National Convention:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I agree to write a thank-you note to the bursary contributors and a short blurb about my experience at convention for publication.

**WE REMEMBER ...**

## MARION FLETCHER



Marion Catherine Isabelle Fletcher, nee Sims, passed away on May 28, 2017. She was born at Crane Valley, Saskatchewan, on February 8, 1928 to Charlotte and James Sims where they farmed. They moved to Chelan by wagon when she was six, eventually homesteading south of Greenwater Lake.

After education and varied jobs, Marion married Jack Fletcher on February 8, 1951.

Marion was a lady and a true farmer. She had her own land and did the seeding for many years. She actively helped with all farm activities, including picking roots and rocks, milking cows, feeding pigs and looking after chickens. She and Jack raised purebred Shorthorn cattle.

Although Marion loved farming, the greater love of her life was her family.

Marion and Jack were life-time members of the National Farmers Union and the New Democratic Party. She also served on the East Central Co-op Board for many years.

On the Board of Local 638 and then as District Director for NFU District 7, Marion was an enthusiastic and fearless leader. She canvassed and organized farmers. She lobbied politicians. She rallied and protested and went to countless meetings. Marion was an activist who did everything she could to help others.

Marion's husband, Jack, passed away in 2011. She leaves to mourn one sister and one sister-in-law; children, lean (Cindy), Iris (David) Fettis, Ivy (Bruce) Bakken, Ivan (Marlene) and Corey; nine grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren and five step-grandchildren.



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# YES



# I would like to:

## Join the National Farmers Union

- Farm Family \$195.00 / year \*\*
- Associate \$ 65.00 / year \*\*
- Youth (14-25) \$ 98.00 / year \*\*

## Donate to the National Farmers Union

- One time donation
  - Monthly donation \*\*
- \_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_ \$500 \_\_\_ Other

\*\* For automatic payments, send credit card information or a cheque marked "void".

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**National Farmers Union, 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6**