



National Farmers Union
Union Nationale des Fermiers



union farmer

Quarterly

Spring 2016 / Vol. 22 Issue 1



Photo: European tour guests, Claudia Schievelbein (with Arbeitsgemeinschaft bauerliche Landwirtschaft in Germany) and Guy Kastler (with the Confederation Paysanne in France) connect with Gerry and Kelly Dube on their farm in La Broquerie, Manitoba after visiting a composting facility. See story on pages 14 and 15.

Strong Communities. Sound Policies. Sustainable Farms.

Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

Although it is arguably the most important NFU communication tool, the *Union Farmer Quarterly* is just one of many tools we use to report on our work and offer our perspective and analysis of farm and food issues to our members, supporters and the public across the country. Many of our other communication tools are electronic, but for members who are either not on-line or who wish to limit their electronic presence, the *Union Farmer Quarterly (UFQ)* and the *Union Farmer Newsletter* may be the only regular link they have to NFU analysis and activity.

In the past, NFU staff took the primary responsibility for pulling together and editing the *UFQ*, but since an NFU Editorial Advisory Committee was established in early 2015, the committee has taken on much of the editing of the *UFQ* and works closely with staff to determine content and contributors for each issue. Staff continue to have primary responsibility for the content and editing of the *Union Farmer Newsletter* along with looking after layout, printing and proof reading details for both publications.

Each of our communication tools serve a different purpose. Although it is not the only role fulfilled by the *UFQ*, the *UFQ* is key to reporting on the work we do across the country and internationally. Each Regional Coordinator plus the President, Women's President and NFU youth are asked to submit reports for each issue. The *UFQ* also provides a venue for reporting on the work and experiences of our

members who are part of the International Program Committee, bringing the work of the NFU to international gatherings of La Via Campesina, and bringing news home to the NFU from other countries who share our common struggle.

Print tools like the *UFQ* and the *Newsletter* always have a lag time between when articles are written and when they hit your mailbox. Electronic communication tools, or social media, are great tools for sharing news and analysis quickly. NFU media releases and opinion pieces (op-eds) are posted on the website and sent to members via email. News and upcoming events, from both within the NFU and from our allies, are regularly posted on the NFU Facebook page, as well as our Twitter account. At times, the Editorial Advisory Committee makes the decision to post articles on the NFU blog, rather than in the *UFQ*.

The current members of the Editorial Advisory Committee are Ann Slater (Chair), Hilary Moore (Vice President of Policy), Coral Sproule, Ayla Fenton, Tony Straathof, Kate Storey and Ella Haley plus staff. The committee is appointed by the Board to ensure a cross-section of representation but with a limited number of committee members. Although we are not able to invite new members to the committee, we welcome your contributions in terms of content or issues you would like us to address. As noted above, we have many different communication tools and if your suggestion is not a good fit for the *UFQ* we may be willing to publish it in another forum. If you have content suggestions, or have a topic you would like to write about, please contact either: Ann Slater at aslater@quadro.net or Hilary Moore at teamworkcsa@hotmail.com. —nfu—

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:

Members \$ 15.00; 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.





—by Jan Slomp

A message from the President

The Struggle for Food Sovereignty

La Via Campesina (LVC) coined the term *food sovereignty* in the late nineties. Food sovereignty is the antidote to a free trade agenda set by multinational corporations with the resulting trend towards deregulation and diminished public policy. At the time, the stories from countries in the south about corporate control were heart wrenching and illustrated not just stalled development, but a reversal of it. With the signing of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) food sovereignty, or the lack of it, is becoming more obvious in Canada.

The railroads in Canada were built after governments created regulation and incentives to invest in them. It was not just the land needed for the rail bed that either the federal government or First Nations gave to the investor. Additional land was donated to sell to prospectors or settlers to generate cash to finance the railroad. All of this was done in exchange for the statutory obligation of railroad companies to move product to and from producers and buyers at a regulated freight rate. These regulations are an essential piece of our sovereignty and food sovereignty.

It is distressing to see the massive abandonment of railroads and sidings across Canada. The companies that own the tracks are unilaterally deciding to abandon or sell tracks. Governments have failed to stop this abandonment. When the company which owned the railroad on Vancouver Island announced that it would sell the tracks, First Nation leaders stepped in and stated that it was unacceptable to them. They reminded all of us that they donated the land for public transportation, not for private gain. Thank goodness our First Nation peoples understand sovereignty.

It was an act of blatant disregard for sovereignty when the Harper government dismissed the farmer-elected Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). Historically, the CWB acted as the enforcer of the statutory obligation for the railroad companies to move grain and supply cars to wherever they were needed. In order to get timely delivery, producer car cooperatives and short line operators depended on the CWB to enforce this statutory obligation.

The port in Churchill, Manitoba was used strategically by the CWB to alleviate congestion on other routes. The Harper government used farmer-owned CWB assets and public funds to invest in the Churchill port to make it attractive for privatization. The Global Grain Group (G3), a joint venture between Bunge and SALIC Canada Ltd (a subsidiary of the state-owned Saudi Agricultural and Livestock Investment Company), has been given the assets of the CWB for free in exchange for an additional \$250 million investment. Thus, G3 now owns both the assets of the former CWB and the terminal in Churchill.

OmniTRAX owns 650 kilometers of rail lines, which are connected to Churchill. OmniTRAX is for sale and the Saudi state-owned company is willing to buy it. So western Canadian farmers can directly part with their grain at an inland terminal operated by a trading company owned by the Saudi Arabian government.

The NFU has work to do to highlight the importance of maintaining and enforcing the *statutory obligation* of the railways to enhance the agenda of *food sovereignty* in Canada.

In Solidarity, Jan Slomp





A message from the Women's President

—by Coral Sproule

Greetings to our members and supporters. The NFU Women's Caucus has a lot of tasks on its plate for the coming year. We want to organize a women's retreat, as we have not had an opportunity to meet face-to-face to share and celebrate our knowledge and experience in many years. In the meantime, we have a lot of planning and organizing to do on other policies related to women in agriculture. One of these tasks is to work with the National Board to develop a comprehensive harassment policy for the National Farmers Union.

A resolution from the Women's Caucus asking the NFU to develop, adopt and implement a harassment policy was passed at our 2015 Annual Convention. To be truthful, many of us were surprised that our progressive general farm organization did not yet have a policy in place that clearly lays out our responsibilities to respect one another and to protect everyone from the possibility of violation of their rights and mental or physical abuse. Many women I spoke with, said that they had experienced a time when their rights and comfort level were not respected in our meetings, social gatherings and everyday work. In the NFU, we have many policies related to women's rights, inequality and gender stereotyping. Upon discussing these issues, some of us were surprised that we did not have any specific policies related to violence and harassment. Our first step to address this was to declare the NFU 46th Annual Convention a safe space for people of all genders, backgrounds and sexual orientation.

As I write this report, I am drawing on the many stories we have heard in media lately on the rights of victims in cases of violence and sexual harassment against women. In some ways, it is a positive step that many victims of violence are now coming forward and we are attempting to

support them and bring their abusers to trial. On the other hand, these stories seem to bring to the surface the fact that these types of abuse are still rampant in our society, in all professions, as well as in homes, schools and other institutions.

We see this reflected in the media, and in all realms of society, where victim shaming and blaming is still rampant and we fail to do our best to respect one another and support the victims by letting them know it is not their fault. The most important thread in all of these stories is this: both men and women are still not doing enough to protect and empower each other since we continue to live in a world where often vulnerable people are violated and made to feel lesser through physical and emotional wrongdoing.

Policies to stop and prevent harassment are especially important to a growing number of women in the agricultural sector. We are often in spaces of relative isolation and sometimes we need further reassurance that we can lead our lives free of fear, and ideally feel we are safe and respected in our work and personal lives. I see our work this year as pivotal in the realm of providing both further acknowledgement and a written policy to provide a space, both literally and figuratively, in our rural communities, our meetings, and in the realm of agricultural business and policy making, where everyone feels welcome to be themselves and to speak and act accordingly.

If you are interested in the work of the NFU Women's Caucus and being involved in our meetings and future events, please contact me at queenbeetfarm@gmail.com or by phone at 613-706-4369.

Coral Sproule, Women's President





— by Dana Penrice,
NFU Youth Vice President

A message from the Youth

NFU Youth Retreat

As I write this in late February, we are busy planning the NFU Youth Retreat at Rundle's Mission on Pigeon Lake, Alberta. Twenty-eight youth, from across the country, will attend. We have selected participants with a range of experience with the NFU as this is a great opportunity to engage new members to build on the work of more experienced youth members.

We will spend some time exploring NFU policies through Kitchen Table Meetings and understanding how youth can support the NFU's membership development work. Participants will share presentations on what is happening in their regions and in their own experiences including presentations on:

- Agroecology and Food Sovereignty in Canada
- Organic 3.0
- La Via Campesina : A Cuba Encounter
- Brazil's Landless Rural Workers Movements
- Trade Agreements and Food Sovereignty
- Farm Succession Planning
- Reducing Barriers to Entry for New Farmers
- Farm Labour Strategies
- Local Food System and Small Scale Farm Organizing: A Manitoba Example
- Pushing for Scale Appropriate Regulations

#MoreFarmers Twitter Chat

Recently, as part of my work with the NFU Youth and Young Agrarians, I participated in a Twitter Chat called #MoreFarmers. For those who do not know what a Twitter Chat is, organizers post a question and people from around the world post their answers and views. It was a great display of people demonstrating how much they care about this issue and how much work needs to be done to find solutions to this challenge. This Twitter Chat was hosted by the National Young Farmers Coalition in the US and Celebrity Chef Curtis Stone. Some of the messages reached close to 6,000 people. I thought that they raised some really great questions and that I would share my answers:

Q1: *Why is it important that more young people start farming?*

A1: Because we need to keep people on the land to grow topsoil and feed our communities.

Q2: *If we do not recruit and support more farmers, what consequences could our nation face?*

A2: In Canada, 75 percent of farmers say they will sell in the next ten years. We need to make sure that land stays in agriculture production.

Q3: *Why do you think it is important to support farmers?*

A3: Because even though agricultural production has increased over the years, it has not translated to money in the farmer's pocket.

Q4: *Why is there such a lack of new and young farmers right now?*

A4: Economically it is a tough row to hoe. Despite that new farmers are doing it for ecological and social justice reasons.

Q5: *Many people carry student loan debt and struggle with it early in their careers—how is this different for farmers?*

A5: New farmers are smart people building a business and performing a public service by growing food!

Q6: *So what is the solution to help new farmers manage student loan debt?*

A6: Get politically active and push for reduced tuition and debt forgiveness policies. If in Canada, join the National Farmers Union!

Q7: *How can the public support #MoreFarmers efforts?*

A7: The majority of new farmers are direct marketing so buy local and get to know your farmer and what matters to them.

To drive this all home, Rebecca Thistlethwaite, author of the book *Farms with a Future* says, "Farmers are the keystone species of a healthy, thriving food system." Well said!

In Solidarity, Dana Penrice



Regional Reports



Region One:

Provinces of PEI, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia



District 1 (PEI)

- by Reg Phelan, Coordinator

Deep Water Wells: A government-appointed committee is holding hearings across the province about the establishment of a Water Act. This is a follow-up to the hearings and report on the Lands Protection Act. The NFU has been involved in the water coalition which is helping to organize participation in and submissions to these hearings. The large processors and the Federation of Agriculture were not satisfied with the outcome of hearings on the Lands Protection Act and, as compensation, they want the moratorium on the drilling of deep wells for irrigation lifted. The moratorium was put in place about fifteen years ago because of heavy nitrate leachate showing up in drinking water and rivers.

Land Issue: Some companies have purchased large acreages of land which put them way over existing land ownership limits. We brought this issue up with the Minister of Agriculture last year and he assured us that he was "on-top of the file". In February, we brought this up with the Deputy Minister and have been promised a meeting with the Minister of Environment and Land and the Minister of Agriculture. A film being done on the land issue on PEI should help to keep the spotlight on what is happening on PEI and in other places.

Trade Justice: We are involved with a coalition called Trade Justice that is doing work on the impact of trade deals. A large public forum is planned for April 27 in Charlottetown. Randall Affleck, our former National Board member, will be on a panel on the impact on supply management.

Other NFU news: We were very saddened this winter by the passing of our District Director, Steven MacKinnon. At an NFU meeting a few days earlier, he was the picture of health and was very excited about a book he just read about Island land and forest in the early 1800s.

During our membership canvas in March, NFU members visited farmers around the province and encouraged them to join the NFU. Our district annual meeting was held at the Milton Community Hall on March 15. —nfu—



District 2 (New Brunswick)

- by Ted Wiggans, Board Member

Land Policy: The New Brunswick government launched an Agricultural Land Policy initiative in November, 2015. The NFU in NB submitted a comprehensive list of recommendations, supported by a detailed policy paper. This was followed by a meeting with the civil servants shepherding the consultation. Previous work by the NFU, nationally and in PEI, was of considerable value in developing and substantiating our submission. Policy flowing from this consultation, if acted upon, has the potential to change the face of rural NB both economically and socially. The NFU in NB will continue to participate in the process to ensure that the interests of farmers are reflected in the final policy.

Kitchen Table Meetings: The annual general meeting of the NFU in NB was held on Sunday, March 13th in Shediac. Prior to this meeting, Kitchen Table Meetings (KTMs) were held in Woodstock, Havelock, Tracadie and Buctouche over the winter. A total of forty-five people, both members and non-members, attended. The values and organizational structure of the NFU were described and recent activities of the NFU in NB were highlighted. The resolution process was outlined to illustrate the democratic, member driven nature of the NFU and to demonstrate how NFU policy is developed. The remainder of the meeting was unstructured so that participants could determine the direction of the conversation.

I think that KTMs should be a routine NFU activity, at least in NB. It is difficult for people to find time to take part in activities that are centered in one location, especially during the winter when inclement weather is an obstacle. These meetings allow new members to become more familiar with the NFU in a relaxed setting and at a low cost in terms of time and travel. For long-term members, it provides an opportunity to remain engaged. For Board members and the Executive Director, it is an opportunity to have face-to-face interaction with our membership. —nfu—



NFU-O/Region Three:



Province of Ontario

- by Karen Eatwell, Coordinator

Farmland Protection in Ontario: The Ontario Government is conducting a 10-year review of the Greenbelt. The Crombie Commission has reviewed the Greenbelt and called for more compact city development. In anticipation of stricter rules, developers are pushing local municipalities to approve sprawl development. Prime farmland just outside of this protected countryside is particularly at risk of “leap-frog development”, as developers and a landbanking company have purchased huge tracts of “development land in waiting”. As development interests pressure municipal councils to annex and rezone farmland, the Ontario government is looking at expanding the Ontario Greenbelt. NFU Region 3 supports the expansion of the Ontario Greenbelt to include Brant County.

NFU locals in Simcoe County and Brant/Hamilton/Halton have been particularly active in the ten-year review but they need the help of NFU members across Canada. A key driver for development on farmland is Walton Group, a Calgary based company worth \$5.2 billion with many investors from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Germany.

The Brant/Hamilton/Halton NFU local is working with Sustainable Brant to challenge the Brantford/Brant boundary “megaspawl deal”. This involves 8,221 acres of mostly prime farmland: the annexation of 6,412 acres by Brantford from Brant County, and joint city and county ventures on another 2,157 acres. Walton Group owns land that would be annexed by the boundary deal.

Our work to protect farmland in southern Ontario reflects the following NFU policy:

- 1) that provincial governments monitor foreign and domestic ownership and control of farmland, and
- 2) the transfer of Class 1, 2 or 3 farmland to non-agricultural be restricted and curtailed.

Your help is needed. Please send letters to Hon. Ted McMeekin, Ontario Minister of Municipal Affairs and

Housing, to oppose the “megaspawl deal” and to support the creation of a Grand River Greenbelt. See www.sustainablebrant.org for sample letters and contacts. Click on Brantford Sprawl or Expanding the Greenbelt into Brant County. Thanks for your support.

Bill 100: This Bill is an Act that will enact the Ontario Trails Act, 2015 and amend various Acts within. The two areas of concerns for many farmers are within the Trespass to Property Act. This new bill needs to address landowners' concerns with trespassers and liability of their actions. Concerns relating to access to private property does not translate into giving right of way.

NFU Membership Drive: In an effort to regain our membership numbers, Aric McBay, a devoted NFU member has been hired by NFU Region 3 as a Membership Development Coordinator. Aric has been working alongside Regional Council to contact lapsed members for the first part of the year which is the key Farm Business Registration renewal period. Aric's efforts are paying off with higher membership numbers. Aric will also help us identify the skills and leadership qualities that need to be developed at our local and regional level so that we may continue to grow and move forward as a strong and solid organization.

Region 3 Convention: In early March, we held the Region 3 Convention in Kingston. Award-winning scientist and author Diana Beresford-Kroeger was featured, and we elected our 2016-17 Regional Council. The convention was well attended. We signed up a few new associate members. NFU President Jan Slomp attended the convention and visited several locals.

—nfu—



"Future Farmer" Tennyson, son of NFU Women's President Coral Sproule and Eric Stone, attended the Region 3 Convention.



Region Five:



Province of Manitoba

- by Ian Robson, Coordinator

In February, the NFU International Program Committee worked with NFU Region 5 to host the *Sowing Seeds: A European Perspective* tour in Manitoba. Public events were held at the University of Manitoba and the Canadian Mennonite University in Winnipeg and at Knox United Church Brandon. These events gave German and French farmers an opportunity to share experiences on farm policy, seed laws, and advocacy with Canadian farmers. Claudia Schievelbein, a farmer and journalist with AbL from Germany, and Guy Kastler, Farmer-Director with Confederation Paysanne France, spoke about their experiences with crop seeds. Thanks to Interlake Forage Seeds, the National Farmers Foundation, La Via Campesina, and Growing Forward II for sponsoring this tour.

Claudia Schievelbein raises potatoes, beans, peas, and soy in northern Germany. Seed laws in Germany require that royalties be paid to private companies on all certified seed, including organic and heritage varieties. However, they do not pay end-point royalties. There is no public plant breeding system in either Germany or France. Farmers buy fifty percent of their seed, the other fifty percent is farm-saved seed thus helping to cut seed costs. Three major court cases hard fought and won by farmers currently make it harder for companies to track all seeds in Germany. For instance, cleaners must report the type of seeds they clean, but due to a court order, they do not have to track the variety. Regarding CETA, there is much concern about Intellectual Property (IP) rights and clauses that allow companies to sue a government for changing laws which provide citizens with needed services. Trade is needed but trade must be fair both ways.

Guy Kastler, a sheep farmer and cheesemaker, has organized with other farmers to help keep crop and vegetable seed genetic diversity alive. France

has many local growing regions, so he encourages farmers to save and reuse seeds, thus, creating local seed selection and breeding. UPOV was adopted early in France and has evolved from a time when many smaller seed breeders existed, to today when the seed supply for major crops is dominated by large investment companies. These large companies do the seed breeding, but they have been granted variety registration by the government to allow them to charge royalties and make returns on investment. Farmers have had some major victories in changing laws. For example, farmers are still able to clean seed on their own properties due to a mass farmer protest. European consumers are not interested in meat raised with the use of added hormones. A few things prevent GMOs from being grown, including a law that allows farmers to sue each other if they find GMOs in their crops that could have come from a neighbouring field.

Region 5 is concerned about the Churchill rail line and grain port. They must be maintained. They are necessary for essential services and were proven to help farmers earn extra money when our Canadian Wheat Board used the Churchill port. Elevator companies are still buying each other out to consolidate their power, and thus, are removing value from farmers' grain. An audit of the removal of the Canadian Wheat Board is being requested.

The Canadian Transportation Agency Review of railway service to customers has been released. Predictably it favors a slow death of the Maximum Revenue Entitlement (MRE) which would cost farmers more for about the same level of service. The NFU has called for a costing review of grain shipping rates allowed under the MRE. This calculation would benefit farmers by lowering rail costs but still allowing return on rail investment. Elevator companies are the clear winners. They are the shippers of grain regardless of rail service. *-nfu-*

NFU Region 5 Convention

Please attend the Region 5 NFU Convention in July 2016.

Watch your mailbox for your notice, and check our new regional website at www.nfu-mb.ca for updates.





Region Six:

Province of Saskatchewan

- by Ed Sagan, Coordinator

We need additional members to keep the NFU strong in the face of all the challenges we have to deal with! The weather in the eastern part of Saskatchewan is excellent as I write this at the end of February. Snow is melting. We have less than 65 centimeters of snow. We had rain in January. This winter we did not have to go to Cuba.

With the loss of the CWB, the farmers of western Canada lost \$6.5 billion. Today, because of the federal Conservative government, we carry \$80 Billion worth of debt. The catalogues for auction sales are equal to the Eaton's catalogues. At the Yorkton, Saskatchewan sales, number one wheat is selling for \$6.50 a bus./ 13.5 protein. However, at Vancouver the wheat is selling for export at \$8.20. Guess who gets \$1.70 profit per bushel? Yet, we ship this grain and we pay shipping costs. Wheat at Kansas City is \$4.41. How do you pay for a new combine or tractor? Many

farmers today are leasing farm equipment, such as combines, tractors and bin hoppers, from the lenders. How do you build up equity on your farm?

A group of producers hopes to reverse the decision made nearly five years ago to terminate the CWB monopoly on wheat and barley sales. The fact, that such a group of farmers could unanimously pass this resolution, is a strong indication to Ottawa that farmers are now feeling the loss of the CWB in their pocketbooks. We have keystone cops in Manitoba and Saskatchewan protecting big grain and chemical companies. In Saskatchewan, a farmer was fined \$150,000 for brown bag seed. Farmers will be encouraged to change their seed inventories to reconstituted supplies.

NFU Region 6 District 3 will hold its annual convention on March 21, 2016 at the Cantuar Hall, northwest of Swift Current. Guest speakers are Jan Slomp, Stewart Wells and Edward Sagan. The NFU Region 6 Convention will be held June 29th and 30th in Bruno, Saskatchewan. In my district, two NFU members have passed away: Jack Reitenbach, in his 92nd year, and Samuel Hickie, son of George and Mary Hickie, in his 50th year. Both worked very hard for the NFU. Our condolences to their families and friends.

—nfu—



Region Seven:

Province of Alberta

- by Doug Scott, Coordinator

Greetings. I hope this finds you all well and in a good frame of mind as we look forward to the 2016 growing season. On our farm I think it will be our 109th crop. Our winter has been very mild and we have received very little snow. Unless we receive a lot of moisture in March this will be one of the driest springs in my memory. There will be no spring runoff and the dugouts will not be full. We can only hope for a year of timely rains.

Politically, the last several months have been interesting in Alberta. They often say in politics that the more things change, the more they stay the same. We have met with Minister Carlier twice in

the past few months, as have other farm groups, so he is well aware of the issues we and other farmers consider important. At present, I cannot see that he has acted on any of our recommendations.

I attended the Alberta Wheat Commission's annual meeting this year, as did several other NFU members. We were upset with what we saw. The organization has a lot of money and wields a lot of power, however, until its governance structure changes so that all farmers receive a ballot in all director elections, it has limited credibility. At present, a very small group controls this powerful, rich and partisan organization, which is wrong. We have recommended to the Minister that this must change.

Several of our members have signed up to take part in the consultations on the implementation of Bill 6: Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. This is a significant time commitment and I thank them. I also hope the youth who attended the Youth Retreat in Alberta in March were able to take time to see some of our beautiful province.

—nfu—



Region Eight:



*Peace River and the
Province of British Columbia*

- by Peter Eggers, Coordinator

Foundation alfalfa seed contaminated with Roundup Ready alfalfa (RRA) has been planted in Alberta! A farmer who wants to remain anonymous detected some RRA in a field he seeded with foundation seed being grown for alfalfa seed. He underseeded and his alfalfa came up so thin that he sprayed Roundup to terminate it. To his surprise, he had an estimated 100 survivors. This happened four years ago but has only come to light now. How will we find out how much seed and hay land is already contaminated? How can a patent on controversial technology, such as genetic modification, threaten the health of nature, animals and people, as well as the financial outcomes for farmers? Alfalfa is the fourth largest crop grown in North America. It is also the first perennial crop to be genetically modified (GM), which presents a special set of contamination problems. This is a bad story all around.

Stephanie Green, a research scientist for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), studied the contamination of wild alfalfa in the western United States (US). She published her peer-reviewed study recently. Her team tested 4580 sites in California, Idaho and Washington State and found that 27 percent of the sites studied had feral or wild alfalfa that was contaminated with RRA. Roundup Ready alfalfa has only been grown commercially in the US between 2005 to 2007 and since 2011. It was removed from the market in 2007 because the a court case determined that the USDA failed to do an adequate environmental impact study. The USDA was required to re-do the environmental assessment before RRA could be re-released. Stephanie Green's study looked at the contamination created from the 2005 to 2007 commercial release of RRA. There were less than 6000 acres under RRA seed production in the US during that time.

What will happen to organic agriculture? Will it go the same way as growing organic canola has gone for me? With a rotation in this area which includes over one-third canola, and virtually all of it being GM canola, there is no co-existence. If I attempted to grow canola I would harvest seed contaminated with the traits of my neighbours' canola. If I used that seed again I would not only grow a GM plant, which I could not use as an organic farmer, but also face the possibility of a lawsuit for patent infringement from the seed company which holds the patent.

This pursuit to control food through patented seed as a result of just a few global players manipulating government regulations, and so on, has to stop. Why on earth is no liability attached to the patent holder making them responsible for the escape of their patented gene into the wild and the cross-contamination of neighbouring fields? If RRA is commercially released in Canada, it is almost certain that all alfalfa seed will have GM traits in the future. De facto patented seed with novel traits would end up destroying conventional breeding and seed saving for all farmers. This would be a wish come true for the biotech industry. Would it also be the wish of farmers and Canadian citizens?

There are some positive signs on the horizon. Hershey chocolate recently announced it will not use GM ingredients in chocolate bars which is scaring sugar beet growers in North Dakota, and probably is southern Alberta, because ninety percent of sugar beets grown in North America are genetically modified to be Roundup Ready. Hershey will only buy sugarcane sugar in the future. Also, Campbell Soup has announced it will go GM ingredient free. —*nfu*—

Do we have your email address?

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To get these emails, please send your address to nfu@nfu.ca with "Please subscribe me" in the subject line of your message. **Include your full name and region** and whether you would like to get messages about women's and/or youth issues, in your message.



In the last issue of the Union Farmer Quarterly (UFQ), we began a new project: introducing you to your elected representatives. In this edition of the UFQ we will introduce some of the Board Members who began their terms of office at the NFU 46th Annual Convention in November, 2015.

Board Member Region 7 (Alberta)

– Glenn Norman



I raise cattle and produce and market forage on my farm east of Bowden, Alberta, along with my wife Patricia and our four cattle dogs. I grew up in this area on the family's mixed farm. My brother and I took over operation of the family farm in the

early 1980s. Our focus at that time was a cow/calf herd, a 500 to 1000 head feedlot and the production of cereals and canola. Over the years, the feedlot became less and less profitable with the loss of competition in the slaughter industry and the increased presence of large captive supplies in corporate-owned and controlled feedlots. We ended the feedlot operation and shifted our focus to more cows and the conventional production of high quality, high protein hard red spring wheat but that ended with the dismantling of the Canadian Wheat Board by the federal Conservative government.

I was left with the cows, the land and the realization that I needed to do things differently to avoid remaining the target of corporate interests. I now direct market quality hay to end users and I am developing a customer base for my farm-raised healthy beef that is fed for flavour and consumer safety. I believe the best and most productive model of healthy food production has, at its heart, the family farm and to maintain the family farm we need healthy rural communities. To this end, we need to work to refocus governments' views away from the pro-corporate profit agenda to a pro-producer one.

Farming is a business where the most effective way for producers to profit from his or her production is for the farmer to retain ownership of the production until it reaches the end user.

To the NFU Board, I bring not only my knowledge of agricultural issues but also my experience in dealing directly with governments, surface and property rights, rural electrification, marketing co-ops, urbanization of rural communities and a true desire for social justice.

–nfu–

Board Member Region 3 (Ontario)

– Tony Straathof



Having grown up on family farms, Tony and Colleen decided to establish their own independent operation thirty years ago. The Straathofs have been at their current location in the Whitewater Region of eastern Ontario for twenty-five years. With

the help of their children: Adrian, Christina, Benedict, Matthew, and Jeannette; the farm has grown to encompass several enterprises. The current focus is on crops, livestock, forestry, and custom work.

As a family farm, the Straathofs practice land stewardship through rotational cropping and staying environmentally aware. Crops grown include corn, soybeans, small grains, and hay. All are grown using sustainable practices. The whole family enjoys working with and promoting their purebred dairy herd. Veal calves contribute to the farm income but also return valuable nutrients back to the land. A favourite time of the year is maple syrup season. The maple syrup enterprise has expanded into the sale of maple sap to a local brewery for their seasonal maple beer. As part of the custom work enterprise, Tony and Ben, offer custom welding and manufacturing of farm equipment. Adrian is home on the farm full-time.

Tony chose the NFU as his preferred farm organization for its grassroots democracy and support of family farms fourteen years ago. He stepped up his involvement in the organization during the drought of 2012. He has since accepted Executive responsibilities at the local, regional and national levels.

Tony and Colleen are strong advocates for post-secondary education in agriculture for a successful farm. As a family, the Straathofs are very optimistic for the future of agriculture and the opportunities available for the next generation.

–nfu–



Board Member - Region 3 (Ontario)

– Dan Kretschmar



Dan Kretschmar was born and raised on his family farm in Muskoka, Ontario, about 150 kilometers north of Toronto. The farm specializes in mixed organic vegetables which are sold to local markets, restaurants and retailers.

Dan returned to the family farm in 2012, after a ten-year absence. This followed his first experience at an NFU convention. The convention was a life-changing event. The level of intellectual conversation, the NFU democratic process, and immediate lasting friendships left him feeling that he had found a long-lost family.

As the Region 3 Youth Advisor, the Region 3 elected IPC representative, and as a Region 3 National Board member, Dan has been heavily involved in the NFU since 2012. On behalf of La Via Campesina and the NFU, he has travelled to Peru, Florida and Brazil doing international work on climate justice and agroecology. Dan has written a number of articles for *the Union Farmer Quarterly* and is currently working on a book. —nfu—



NFU 47th Annual Convention

Thurs., November 24 to Sat., November 26, 2016

Hilton Garden Inn Downtown
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan



Room Rates: \$169.00 plus tax (includes parking)
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Book by: October 22, 2016 to receive the convention rate
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To make your room reservation, please call the hotel directly at **306-244-2311** or email your requests to reservations@hgisaskatoon.com.



The following NFU committees still have vacancies:

National Board:

Need a representative from Region 6 (Saskatchewan) and Region 8 (Peace River/BC).

Women's Advisory Committee:

Need representatives from Regions 7 (Alberta) and 8 (Peace River/BC).

Fundraising Committee:

Open to any members interested in fundraising for the NFU.



Basking in Basque Food Sovereignty

— by Alex Fletcher, NFU Member from Region 8

Last fall I had the opportunity to participate in a Food Sovereignty tour in the Basque region of Spain as a delegate for the NFU. The tour was organized by Food First and hosted by the Basque Farmers Union, EHNE Bizkaia, a fellow member organization of La Via Campesina (LVC).



Photo: The tour group along with some of the Basque Farmers Union organizers outside the Farmers Union's office.

OVERVIEW:

The tour consisted of nine days of travelling throughout the Basque region visiting farms and co-ops, meeting with different Basque Union leaders, learning about Basque food and culture, and feasting on great food and wine. Our group of twelve participants included academics, students, seasoned activists, foodies and farmers. A Food First tour guide and organizers from the Basque Farmers Union guided and accompanied us throughout the tour.

We arrived in Bilbao and spent our first five days based out of the town of Etxano. From Etxano we travelled to Bergara for the latter half of the tour. There was a lot packed into each day including:

- touring a municipally-supported food processing co-operative in the town of Zeberio;
- taking part in a cheese-making workshop; visiting the Bizkaigane Cooperative, an organic cow and sheep milk cheese farm;
- visiting the Mondragon Cooperative in Mondragon-Arrasate and the Mondragon dairy cooperative in Behi-Alde;
- travelling to Iparralde, the part of the Basque region that is in France; and
- visiting the La Rioja region to learn about traditional wine production.

At the end of the trip, we visited the Basque Farmers Union's office to learn more about the history and future of the union and the agrarian movement in the Basque Country.

A few key highlights for me on this trip were:

The Juxtaposition of Supply Management in Spain and Canada

Spain's supply-managed dairy system was dismantled a few months before our tour took place. It was negotiated away several years earlier when Spain entered the European Union (EU). At one dairy co-op I asked about the impact of losing supply management. The farmer paused before replying, "it is like a tsunami". The promises they had been told about access to new markets and protection for small producers have not materialized. Spain has been flooded with cheap milk imports and the price has sunk. Another dairy farmer we met with spoke enviously about a distant country where the price of milk has been protected for farmers. "Where has the price for dairy farmers been sustained?", she asked rhetorically. Her answer was, "Canada".

The Political Strategy of the Basque Farmers Union

An elder of the organization explained that three decades ago the Basque Farmers Union made the strategic decision to abandon the industrial agriculture model. Instead of viewing themselves as primary producers of commodities for other industries, they adopted the identity of *food* producers. About a decade later they shifted their strategic direction again, this time towards sustainable agriculture. Currently, they are again in the process of another fundamental shift in their organizational model as they integrate and adopt food sovereignty as their guiding philosophy.

(continued on page 14...)



(*Basking in Basque, from page 13*)

Connecting with farmers and La Via Campesina members

I have always valued being part of La Via Campesina through my membership in the NFU. However, spending time with members and organizers of the Basque Farmers Union, as well as American farmers in the tour group, gave me a deeper, more tangible appreciation for the international exchanges and solidarity that NFU members have access to through LVC. It is encouraging and inspiring to meet farmers and union leaders from other parts of the world who face similar challenges and are working towards common goals.

Thanks to the National Farmers Union and the International Program Committee, Food First and EHNE Biskaia for making this opportunity available and for supporting my participation on the tour. —*nfu*—

Three keys to the political strategy of the Basque Farmers Union:

1. Focus on building bridges between producers and urban populations. For example, they have developed over twenty-five producer to consumer marketing networks, as well as partnerships with public universities. They recognize that today the union model is insufficient if it is limited only to the diminished agricultural sector, so they have moved beyond the traditional union model towards building a broader social movement.
2. Focus on offering practical, tangible benefits to members. For example, help to navigate tax codes, deal with municipal issues, and maintain and develop food infrastructures like processing facilities and abattoirs.
3. Place a strong emphasis on offering training programs that are theoretical and technical, but also, importantly, ideological. As one union leader stated, "training is a political act". They are currently delivering agroecology training to over 800 students a year.

Sowing Seeds of Collaboration between Canadian and European Farmers

– Seed, Trade and Advocacy

Since farmers are always keen to see what farms are like in other locations, Claudia Schievelbein showed a number of photographs from her 100 hectare family potato and grain farm in northern Germany, before moving into a discussion of European seed and trade policies with southwestern Ontario farmers.

Claudia and French farmer, Guy Kastler, were in Canada for the *Sowing Seeds: A European Perspective* tour in late February. Both are active in farm organizations which, like the NFU, belong to La Via Campesina (LVC): Claudia with Arbeitsgemeinschaft bauerliche Landwirtschaft (AbL) and Guy with the Confederation Paysanne in France. Their tour was funded by Growing Forward 2 in Manitoba, the National Farmers Foundation and two Ontario NFU locals (Huron and Perth/Oxford). After spending several days in Manitoba, the two farmers

travelled to Ontario for a public meeting in southwestern Ontario and then on to Quebec to attend the annual meeting of the other Canadian member of LVC, Union Paysanne.

According to Claudia, AbL believes it is important for farmers to link with other parts of society, including environmental groups, churches and consumers. For the last six years, they have organized a demonstration in Berlin in January to help build stronger relationships with and awareness among consumers. Both consumers and AbL want a kind of farming that is good for the environment, for animals and for farmers. Claudia said that both animal welfare and GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are big topics in Germany. Food with GM ingredients must be labelled, but meat or dairy products from animals fed GM feed do not need to be labelled. In Germany, some dairies have started to require that milk sold to

(continued on page 15...)





Taking a break from their speaking engagements, Claudia and Guy stand next to an image of Red River Rebellion leader, Louis Riel, at Fort Gibraltar during Festival du in Voyageur activities in Winnipeg on February 21, 2016.

them come from cows that are not fed any GM crops, and these dairies are labelling their dairy products as GMO-free. Consumer support for this GMO-free dairy has led supermarkets to request that all dairy products become GMO-free.

In terms of seed policy, Claudia said that in Germany there is very little public breeding or seeds in the public domain. Farmers are used to breeders breeding new varieties and charging royalties on the seed, although a lot of wheat in Europe is still grown from farm-saved seed. End-point royalties are not used in Germany and they have a farmers' privilege under their Plant Breeders Rights (PBR) laws. Plant breeders have tried to force German farmers to pay royalties on farm-saved seed, first by trying to get farmers to give them information on the varieties they are growing and the size of fields, and when that did not work, by going through the seed cleaners. Courts have limited the amount of information that breeders can collect from either farmers or seed cleaners. For example, the EU high court ruled that seed cleaners have to give information, such as crop type, to plant breeders but they do not need to give variety names.

Guy has recently retired after farming since 1983 in southern France. During his presentation, Guy discussed how international trade agreements, such as CETA, are pushing down the prices of agricultural products like milk and wheat in France. He believes that lower prices will lead to the bankruptcy of many

small to mid-sized farms. Two years ago French farmers sold a tonne of milk for 320 or 330 Euros. Following the market deregulation of milk in Europe, French farmers now receive 240 to 245 Euros, which is below the cost of production. The average size dairy herd in France is 57 cows. Due to the global trade in milk and trade deals, he expects almost all farms with 50 to 150 cows will go bankrupt, as will average size farms in other commodities. Smaller farmers who sell locally and direct at the farmgate are able to set their own price and, therefore, are doing better.

It costs farmers in New Zealand 200 Euros to produce a tonne of milk because of their climate. Similarly, Australia is able to produce wheat cheaper than European farmers, again because of their climate. In both cases, European farmers will be pushed out of the European market. Guy suggested that it is not Europeans who are going to be taking over the Canadian dairy market, but rather New Zealand with their lower-priced milk.

In 2013, the French government wanted to put in place a law which stated that the owners of intellectual property, including patents and plant breeders' rights, could ask customs officials or the police to seize merchandize if they suspected an infringement of their intellectual property rights. For farmers, this could mean that any plant breeder could go to the authorities and say they believed there had been an infringement. Farmers could have been prevented from selling harvested crop for two or three years while the case worked its way through the courts. Farmers said that if that law went through then they would not be able to plant anymore. One hundred and fifty farmers went to Paris and occupied the head offices of seed companies and refused to leave until the law was struck down. Farmers' right to save seed is popular in France. Seed was exempted from the law.

It has been forbidden to save your own seed in France since 1970 but farmers are still doing it. But, according to Guy, three to four thousand farmers are working with researchers to select seeds for organic agriculture, and they are exchanging seeds with each other. Organic farmers need diversity to select the plants that are best adapted to the specific conditions on their farm. The French PBR law has been amended to allow French growers to exchange seeds, as long as the variety does not have PBR protection. Guy encouraged Canadian farmers to continue to save and exchange seeds.

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NEW INSURANCE PLAN FOR NFU MEMBERS

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Drug Definition	Lowest priced equivalent drug substitution	Lowest priced equivalent drug substitution
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Termination Clause	Terminates at the earlier of age 70 or retirement	Terminates at the earlier of age 70 or retirement
<u>Dental Care</u>		
Deductible	N/A	N/A
Basic Services	80% Basic	100% Basic
Major Services	50% Major	50% Major
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Soil Health is Key

– *Lessening farmers' impact on water*

Panel: Farming's Impact on Water - Regulations vs Best Management Practices with panelists:

Craig Merkley, Conservation Services Specialist; **Mari Veliz**, Healthy Watersheds Supervisor; and **Reg Phelan**, NFU Board Member (Region 1 PEI).

Given that the theme of the NFU's 46th Annual Convention in November, 2015 was *Soil: Our Common Ground*, it is no surprise that the key message from all panelists on a Saturday morning panel was to focus first on soil health. However, some convention attendees may have expected somewhat different messages from a panel titled *Farming's Impact on Water – Regulations vs Best Management Practices*. All three panelists also provided some interesting examples of how the move to larger farms creates challenges when it comes to protecting water.

The three panelists on the *Farming's Impact on Water* panel were Craig Merkley, Conservation Services Specialist with the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA), Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Supervisor with the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) and Reg Phelan, an NFU Board member from Prince Edward Island. Both the UTRCA and the ABCA are located in southwestern Ontario. The Thames river flows into Lake Erie and the Ausable and Bayfield rivers flow into Lake Huron.

The focus of Craig Merkley's presentation was a research project carried out by UTRCA to evaluate the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) on a watershed level, specifically the use of structures. In the late eighties and early nineties, a demonstration project in the North Kettle Creek watershed installed a variety of erosion control structures on one side of the creek. The other side of the creek was left alone to provide a comparison. For the next twenty-five years the project was left dormant. Recently, the UTRCA went back to the same watershed to evaluate how various structures held up and to see how effective structures like berms, rock chutes and grassed waterways had been at controlling erosion and holding water on the landscape, over the previous twenty-five years.

Based on the recent evaluation of these structures, Craig said that structures work to control



Panelists Craig Merkley, Reg Phelan and Mari Veliz.

runoff but they must be maintained and they have to be considered as part of a larger suite of BMP's. He talked about a particular L-shaped berm that was part of the original project. Over the twenty-five years since the berm was installed it has accumulated three tonnes of soil per acre per year. Craig noted that this level is what they shoot for but questioned whether or not that is really an acceptable level of soil loss. In the intervening time some farmers in the watershed have built their own erosion control structures but without the technical assistance provided during the initial project. After looking at those farmer-built structures, the evaluation project found that making technical assistance available to farmers is a key element to the success of erosion control structures.

UTRCA was also able to look at the soil loss and run-off from farms with different types of management practices along with the installed structures. Although structures can help, Craig suggested structures are a band-aid solution and their greatest benefit may be in acting as a "wake-up call" to draw attention to the need to pay more attention to upstream soil health and soil structure. In Craig's opinion, a conclusion from the evaluation of the North Kettle Creek project is that soil structure and health are key.

There are some significant changes since the mid-nineties in the North Kettle Creek watershed and

(continued on page 18...)



across the Upper Thames watershed. First, the changing climate has led to an increase in the intensity of rain storms. Second, during their research they documented an increase in the amount of rented land, as farms get larger. In the mid-nineties, seventy-five percent of land in the North Kettle Creek watershed was owner-operated. By 2011, the amount of owner-operated land had decreased to twenty-five percent of the farmland. Craig says that this change can be seen in the land; it is just not cared for as well. One solution might be to incorporate some of the management practices which protect soil health and structure into land rental agreements.

Mari Veliz also spoke about a research project carried out by a conservation authority at a watershed level: this time by the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) in the Gully Creek Watershed in Huron County. In her work, Mari regularly meets with communities that look at the land-water connection from the bottom of the watershed, in particular through nutrient levels on beaches along Lake Huron. She suggested farmers look at and understand the land-water connection in a different way, from the top of the watershed down.

The research done by ABCA looked at the movement of water, sediment and nutrients in the watershed and pointed to a hierarchy of both urban and agricultural BMPs. This hierarchy can be illustrated by a pyramid. Soil management practices, like cover crops, nutrient/manure management, crop rotation, natural soil cover (as opposed to pavement) and reduced tillage, are at the base of the pyramid. Further up the pyramid are structures like berms, wetlands, controlled drainage and grassed waterways and at the top are buffers and two-stage ditches. Without that soil health base, Mari said that water and sediment control structures are not effective. In Mari's opinion, soil health is a key first step and building organic matter in soil to keep nutrients and sediment upstream is better for water quality from the top of the watershed to the bottom of the watershed and for water quality in the Great Lakes.

Farms in the ABCA watershed are also increasing in size and becoming more specialized. Mari showed a recent aerial photograph of a 150-acre field growing one crop. Viewing an older aerial photograph shows that in 1955 that same 150-acre field was twenty-two smaller fields, with fence lines and field boundaries with shrubs and trees between each field. A variety of different crops were growing in those smaller fields and twenty percent of the 150 acres was planted to hay or pasture.

Mari also noted the increase in intensity of rain events in the ABCA area. In response to the question of BMPs versus regulation, both Mari and Craig said it is not possible to regulate the rain coming out of the sky and that seven-inch rainstorms, which are becoming more common in southwestern Ontario, are beyond our control. As farmers, we can, however, make management decisions to enhance soil health and soil structure by rotating crops, using cover crops and reducing tillage.

Reg Phelan says that Islanders take a lot of pride in the taste of PEI water. Prince Edward Island has a long history of growing row crops, especially potatoes, but it is only in recent years that there have been water-quality problems. People are digging deeper and deeper to find water that is not contaminated by nitrates, especially if they live close to major row-crop operations. However, the deeper you dig in PEI, the greater the risk of digging so deep that salt water starts to seep into the well.

Soils in PEI tend to be sandy which means excess nutrients move deeper into the soil fairly fast and soils tend to be low in organic matter. In the past, PEI had a lot of small farmers with crops and livestock being raised together on each farm. In the late 1960s, the PEI government started offering incentives to shift PEI's farm system towards larger, more industrialized farms. Around the same time, some farmers, including an ecological group of NFU members, began doing experimental work on their own and each other's farms looking for practices that would increase soil organic matter to hold water and lead to healthier soils.

According to Reg, a current challenge in PEI is keeping enough livestock on the Island to provide adequate compost and manure to the overall Island farm system. The PEI Lands Protection Act has helped keep farmers in control of farm land but it is an ongoing challenge to keep the Act in place. Crop rotation is a part of the act but is not always enforced. The ongoing debate around the Lands Protection Act and deep water wells in PEI often comes down to what type of agriculture Islanders would like to see on the Island. In Reg's opinion, educational initiatives and on-farm experiments on soil health are as important as regulations like the Lands Protection Act when it comes to protecting both soil and water.

During the question period, Gary Martens, a panelist on the opening panel of the convention titled *The Policy-Soil Interface*, suggested that the message from this panel on water could be boiled down to "let's give farmers incentives to raise organic matter in their soil".

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Climate change, greenhouse gases, family farmers, and the food system

NFU research project to examine how we can make our farms, communities, soils and food systems healthier and resilient.

Many farm families across Canada have been hit by extreme weather: torrential rain, flooding, drought, storms or unusually hot or cold weather. Climate change is a significant issue on our farms, and it will become more so. New policies and approaches are needed to help us deal with climate impacts. Further, while farming contributes to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, farmers are working to reduce their emissions by changing tillage and seeding methods, altering livestock raising practices, optimizing fertilizer use, changing rotations and integrating new crops. Farm families are making changes to be part of the solution.

The National Farmers Union is undertaking an ambitious project in Region 5 (Manitoba) to study the intersecting issues of climate change, agriculture, the larger food system, GHG emissions, energy use, new technologies, soil carbon and soil fertility. NFU officials, members, researchers, and cooperating experts will take a big-picture look at how farming and food production may have to change in order to reduce GHG emissions, in line with national and provincial commitments. We will also examine how we can make our farms, communities, soils, and food systems healthier and more resilient in the face of looming climate impacts.

In addition to this longer term, big-picture analysis, the NFU will come up with detailed and practical measures farmers and policymakers can implement in the near term. In the coming year, we will consult with farmers and academics in Manitoba and other provinces, hold meetings, publish reports and discussion papers, develop a website and mobile portal aimed at reaching farmers with practical advice, and develop recommendations for all levels of government.

Finally, the context for the NFU's research and recommendations will be the larger food system and society. We will look, not just at our fields, livestock and tractors, but also at the input, transportation, processing, and retailing sectors, and at households. There are irrationalities and inefficiencies in our food system. For example, Canadians waste up to forty percent of our food (Gooch et al. 2010). As another example, for Manitoba cattle to be turned into beef to sell in Manitoba stores, the animal and the meat must often make a 2,000 kilometer round trip to Alberta or Ontario, and back. The problems and solutions are intertwined and must be approached holistically. At all stages, those working on this project will be talking to NFU members and other citizens to gain input and guidance.

NFU Region 5 Coordinator Ian Robson said at the project's launch that "the research we are about to undertake will provide a solid foundation for policy recommendations to support farmers' role in making agriculture more climate-friendly." He continued, "we are in an excellent position to look at the big picture of climate and agriculture and help make agriculture policy that addresses the farm, the community, rural and urban people so that the food system supports a vibrant standard of living that is environmentally sustainable."

This project is made possible by generous funding from Manitoba's provincial government and the Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship's Climate Change Action Fund (CCAF). Manitoba NFU Board members Ian Robson and Dean Harder will provide leadership on this initiative with the help of a steering committee. The NFU has contracted with its former Director of Research, Darrin Qualman, to coordinate the

(continued on page 20...)



The NFU would like to invite all members to participate in this research project.

Please consider providing the following:

- Your ideas and input regarding how farms in Manitoba and elsewhere, and the larger food system, can be redirected to lower their emissions and to better withstand climate impacts.
- Suggestions for practical solutions we can feature on a new website and mobile portal.
- Names of possible part-time research assistants/interns. In a perfect world, these would be young people, from Manitoba farms, who have research and writing skills (perhaps university students or recent graduates), and who might be able to continue working with the NFU or other groups in the future.

We are looking for help in our project, but we also want to build long-term capacity to work on issues of energy, climate, emissions, agriculture, and food.

- The name of a web designer/programmer or company that creates a top-notch website.

If you know of people who we should consider for these roles, please let the NFU office know at 306-652-9465 or email nfu@nfu.ca.

If you have ideas, input, or solutions regarding agriculture and climate change, please share those with our Coordinator, Darrin Qualman (climate@nfu-mb.ca).

(Climate change, from page 19)

project and to take the lead in research and writing. Increased funding and research capacity mean that although the NFU will be expanding its work on climate change over the coming year, it will not diminish its activities on the broad range of other issues it pursues on behalf of farm families.

The NFU is at the beginning of this project. This *Union Farmer* article introduces our plans, the approaches we want to take, and some of the benefits we hope to derive.

Though this project is focused in Manitoba, it will help the NFU maintain and strengthen its leadership role in public policy discussions on climate change *across Canada*. The NFU will ensure that public policies such as carbon taxes and agricultural risk management plans protect the economic viability of family farms and the environmental integrity of our ecosystems.

The National Farmers Union has a long history of working on this issue. In 2003, climate change was the theme of the NFU's 34th Annual Convention and the organization released its report: *Climate change in Canada: Adaptation and Mitigation*. In the intervening years, internationally, through La Via Campesina, and nationally and regionally, through many venues, the NFU has been active on the issue of climate change.

We look forward to your input and to working closely with members. And we are excited about this project to look into the future and begin to develop a path forward that can improve our environment, our soils, our communities, and most of all, the capacities of farm families to prosper and remain on the lands they care for.

You can reach the NFU's Coordinator on the climate change project, Darrin Qualman, at climate@nfu-mb.ca.

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Critical Issues for New Farmers

– *the challenge of accessing capital and land*

Each year NFU staff and board members endeavour to ensure the NFU Youth have a place within the agenda of our annual convention. Along with the reports from the Youth President and the Youth Caucus, we provide young and new farmers with a voice during panel presentations. At the 46th Annual Convention in November, 2015 the NFU youth took over the stage on Friday afternoon for a panel discussion titled *NFU Youth Investigate: Critical Issues for New Farmers*.

The four panelists were Ayla Fenton, NFU Youth President, Julia LaForge, a PhD student in Geography at the University of Manitoba, Shannon Jones from Broadfork Farm in Nova Scotia and Lydia Carpenter from Luna Field Farm in Manitoba. The panel highlighted the work of the National New Farmer Coalition, in particular, the initial findings from a 2015 cross-Canada survey of new farmers. Ayla spoke first and gave some background on the National New Farmer Coalition. The Coalition is led by the NFU Youth but it also provides an opportunity for NFU Youth to work with other new farmer organizations, like the Young Agrarians, to advocate for policies at the national, provincial and municipal levels to support a new generation of farmers. The Canadian National New Farmer Coalition was inspired by the very successful US National Young Farmers Coalition.

In early 2015, a survey created by the National New Farmer Coalition was sent out to new farmers across the country, mostly through social media and email channels with a variety of organizations. The survey was filled out by 1326 farmers and gave respondents an opportunity to provide input on both the obstacles faced by new farmers and the programs that are supporting new farmers. The top three obstacles across the country were affordability of land, access to capital and low profitability in the agricultural sector. Programs that support new farmers vary from region to region, and are run by both governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Shannon Jones and her partner Bryan Dyck own and operate Broadfork Farm in Cumberland County, Nova Scotia. They grow mixed vegetables, cut flowers and medicinal herbs on their small fifteen acre farm. Produce from the farm is sold through farmers' markets, restaurants and health food stores. They are typical of many new farmers in that

they did not grow up on farms, but gained farm experience through farm internships and by working on farms for many years before venturing out on their own. In preparation for starting their own farm, they took a farm business course offered through Everdale Environmental Learning Centre in Ontario. A major part of the course was developing a farm business plan which Shannon described as very valuable to the ongoing success of their farm.

Like many new farmers, they began their own farm operation on leased land but they soon decided they needed to purchase their own land, which led to the challenge of finding money to pay for it. They first approached their local Credit Union but were told it did not do farm loans. On the advice of other farmers, they next approached Farm Credit Canada (FCC). In their application to FCC they highlighted their business plan, which clearly showed how they could pay back the mortgage, and their many years of experience. After driving two hours to meet with an FCC loan officer, they were told the chances of them getting a loan from FCC did not look good. When the officer called them back a few days later he told them the only way FCC would consider giving them a loan would be if either Shannon or Bryan got a full-time, off-farm job. Their business plan was built around both partners working full-time on the farm. They were left feeling that there is a cultural policy within FCC to not recognize or acknowledge the viability of small-scale, direct market farms.

Being in Nova Scotia has been a benefit for Shannon and Bryan, as Nova Scotia is the only province which still has a Farm Loan Board under the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture. The Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board saw their business plan and experience as an asset and lent them money for the land. The Board then offered to lend them additional money for capital purchases like a tractor,

(continued on page 22...)



(Critical Issues for New Farmers, from page 21)

implements and greenhouses which Shannon and Bryan were happy to accept. Shannon says that they always pay their mortgage on time and they feel their type of business should be viewed more favourably by other agricultural lenders.

Using the data from the survey, as well as existing research and data, the Canadian National New Farmer Coalition is now working on a report that will summarize the challenges and opportunities faced by new farmers. It will contain policy recommendations for multiple levels of government as well as NGOs. Recommendations related to accessing capital and land will likely include the creation of a national grant program, a review of FCC's Young Farmers Loan Program, the creation of a micro loans program within FCC, setting up a nation wide land trust and putting incentives and programs in place to help current farmers pass their land on to new farmers.

For more information on the National New Farmer Coalition, contact newfarmercoalition@gmail.com .

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We Remember ...

CATHLEEN KNEEN



Cathleen (née Rosenberg) Kneen passed away peacefully at home in Ottawa on February 21st, 2016, aged 72 after a struggle with pancreatic cancer. She is survived by her beloved life and work partner of 53 years, Brewster Kneen, children Jamie Kneen (Soha) and Rebecca Kneen (Brian McIsaac), grandson Theodore, sister Jeannie Rosenberg and many colleagues and friends across the country and around the world.

Cathleen attended university at Edinburgh, Memorial, and Carleton, meeting Brewster through her activism in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and soon marrying him, in 1964.

Cathleen's activism wove together common themes of healthy communities and people. Her early years in the peace movement in Toronto shifted to women's liberation, as a founding member of the Pictou County Women's Centre in Nova Scotia – and after moving back to Toronto, as Executive Director of the Toronto Assaulted Women's Help Line. During her fifteen years in Nova Scotia, she also developed her admirable skills as a potter, ran a successful sheep farm with her family, organized the Sheep Producers of Nova Scotia's annual sheep fair, and for many years, contributed a weekly Farm Diary to the local noon program on CBC Radio.

When the Kneens moved to British Columbia in 1995, Cathleen began to integrate her commitment to social justice with her farm background. She was instrumental in founding the Mission City Farmers' Market, the Sorrento Village Farmers' Market, and the BC Food Systems Network and served on the board of the Certified Organic Associations of BC. Upon her return to Ontario in 2006, Cathleen was elected Chair of the newly-formed Food Secure Canada, served on the management team of the People's Food Policy Project and was chair of Just Food Ottawa and the Ottawa Food Policy Council.

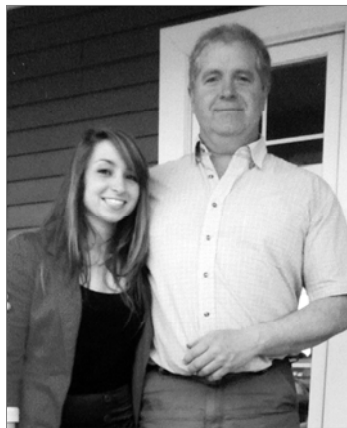
For 25 years, Cathleen worked alongside Brewster as editor, co-writer, illustrator and designer of *The Ram's Horn* newsletter, which had a worldwide following, as well as editing his books. Whatever she involved herself in, Cathleen committed herself fully, applying her considerable energy to building a participatory, feminist path for people to connect and make positive change together to bring about the vision of a just and peaceful world she held so clearly. The work of her hands will be held by many on a daily basis, in the pottery she made.

A visitation was held on Friday, February 26 at the Ottawa Funeral Co-operative. There will be other celebrations all over the country throughout the spring as well. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to Inter Pares, the BC Food Systems Network, the National Farmers Union, and/or MiningWatch Canada/the Canary Research Institute on Mining, Environment, and Health.



We Remember ...

STEVEN MACKINNON



Members of the National Farmers Union in Prince Edward Island were shocked and deeply saddened to learn of the sudden passing of Steven MacKinnon on January 25, 2016 as the result of heart-related implications. He was 53.

At the time of his passing, Steven was completing his second year serving as District Director of the NFU in P. E. I. He was an NFU member since his teenage years and served as President of NFU Local 104 for many years.

A 7th-generation farmer, Steven's farm in New Argyle was farmed by MacKinnon family members since 1808 - something for which he had great respect and admiration. He was passionate about issues affecting the family farm and was unafraid to stand up for what he felt was right. At the same time, he respected the views of others and enjoyed many a good discussion.

Steven was a visionary - he was one of the first farmers in PEI to farm in an ecological manner. He had a tremendous respect for the land and was keenly aware of the necessity of preserving and protecting all aspects of the environment. He had a wonderful ability to critique many situations and to see solutions for the future. He often spoke of the forces that are negatively affecting our communities and stated, "The people who live in a given community are the ones that should have the right to use the resources - not some faceless corporation".

NFU members express sincere sympathy to his daughter Janell MacDonald (Kyle Smith) and to all other family members.



ELEANOR MARLYNE WOTHERSPOON

Eleanor Marlyne Wotherspoon passed away peacefully on January 19th, 2016 at the Cypress Regional Hospital with her family by her side. She is survived by husband David, children, Debbie Horvey (Gary) - Jill Booth (Neil) Aubrielle, Karla (Kyle), Darren, Duane (Kristen), Darrell (Donna) - Kristen (Dave), Tyler (Kaitlin), Maureen (Colin), Janice Bissonnette (Rich)-Shayn, Cole, Haley. Sisters Anna Potter, Elaine Sander (Jim), sister-in-law, Gail Wotherspoon, brothers-in-law, Ormand Klaassen, Leslie Wotherspoon (Barb), Robbie Wotherspoon, and numerous nieces and nephews that she was close to.

Eleanor was involved with National Farmers Union, where she held positions of District Women's Director, Local Secretary and District Secretary. She enjoyed the NFU Women's meetings and workshops. She was a member of Cantuar Busy Bees and secretary/treasurer for the Cantuar Hall board. She loved talking politics, being especially passionate when it came to the NDP.

Eleanor married Davie Wotherspoon on April 12, 1957 at the First United Church. They operated an organic cattle farm. They had 4 children: Debbie, Darrell, Maureen & Janice. Mom was involved with our activities of sports, music lessons & 4H. She carried this interest on with all of her grandchildren as well. Her door was always open to nieces, nephews, grandchildren as well as kids in the neighborhood. Her friends were an important part of her life. Together they enjoyed many activities such as line dancing, painting, card playing, going to garage sales & out for lunches. As Eleanor once wrote, "We live in the best part of the world and the best neighbourhood; that's a lot to be thankful for."

In memory of Eleanor, donations may be made to the Cantuar Community Hall - Box 1331, Swift Current, S9H 3X4 or the National Farmers Union, 2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 4B6.



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The Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

Working with the family of Paul Beingessner, the National Farmers Union has established an annual literary prize in honour of Paul and his contribution to rural and agricultural journalism.

Paul Beingessner was a farmer, an activist, and a writer who defended Canada's family farms until his tragic death in a farm accident in the spring of 2009. His widely-read and respected weekly columns brought a fresh and progressive perspective to rural and farm issues. Young writers are encouraged to submit their work to the Paul 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 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: *My Future Vision for Canada's Farming and Food System***
- Deadline for entries is November 1, 2016.
- The winners will be announced at the NFU Convention in November 2016.
- All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.

Send entries to the National Farmers Union:

By email: 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.