

quarterly union farmer



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Bucking the Trend! NFU Youth buck the aging trend in Canadian farming - and have fun doing it at the National Convention and all year.

Strong Communities. Sound Policies. Sustainable Farms.
Des communautés solidaires et des politiques sensées pour une agriculture durable.



Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

— by Glenn Norman, NFU Vice President of Policy
(on behalf of the Editorial Advisory Committee)

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself and tell you a little bit about me. I have been an Alberta NFU member since 2013 and a member of the National Board and/or the Executive for the last five years.

I grew up on my family's mixed farm east of the town of Bowden in south central Alberta where my parents raised six kids putting four of them through post-secondary education and making a reasonable living while doing it. I left at 17 to seek my fame and fortune, coming back 15 years later to farm with my partners, my father and brother. It was a very different farm than the one I left, gone were the dairy and beef cows, pigs, chickens, turkeys, ducks, horses, and the hay and grain grown mostly to feed them with a little extra to sell. It had become a much higher input cow/calf, feedlot and grain for

export operation which we grew and expanded until the dissolution of the partnership in 2009.

I learned some interesting lessons in those years of farming, one being that there is a constant financial squeeze placed on you by the use of ever higher inputs in order to maintain viability in this high input world with no or very little control over your per unit returns. In the late '90's, we closed our 1000 head feedlot because of the loss of competition due to the processor's use of large captive feedlots to manipulate fat cattle prices.

With the loss of the feedlot, land previously used to grow feed became available to grow cash crops but without the natural fertilizer provided by the livestock. So began the race for greater use of commercial fertilizer, bigger equipment, more

chemicals and higher yielding seed with diminished profit per acre. Along with this came ever increasing stress.

In 2009 the partnership ended with the untimely death of my brother. After estate settlement, I began to rethink how to create a more viable farm. The CWB was gone and the grain companies were doing to the smaller grain farms what the meat processors did to the small feedlots. It was clear to me that I needed to escape this corporate game and focus on farmgate profits. I now raise beef and bees, and grow hay that I direct market. I use minimal off farm inputs, keep my profits and have far less stress. Seems I should have paid a lot more attention to how my father farmed when I was young. ■

Coming soon to the NFU website and social media!

*Three beautiful and inspiring videos featuring NFU members past and present.
Created by Dean Harder and shown for the first time at our 50th National Convention in Winnipeg.*

Look for them at nfu.ca and on Facebook.

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A Message from Katie Ward, NFU National President

I tend to think about winter in two phases, although they are not really linear. As challenging as the bone chilling cold of this season can be, there is something about the shorter days that makes winter feel like the perfect time for pausing to take stock of the past year. Using that information in the period of rest (hibernation?) that nature imposes on us, phase two involves getting yourself centred and gathering your resources to be ready and renewed for the growing season to come.

We certainly had a grand occasion to take stock of where we have come from as the National Farmers Union at our recent 50th Anniversary Convention! It feels a bit strange to talk about a celebration as an opportunity to take stock, the two ideas seem a bit at odds, but it really was both. We had great opportunities to hear stories about why we needed a National Farmers Union in the first place, and the battles that were fought which paved the way for us to still be here today, on the front lines of the farm movement. One of our speakers was asked, in light of how we lost some of those battles, would they do it again knowing the outcome. The reply

was a very thoughtful, “Absolutely. Because it was the right thing to do.” To me, that sums up the sense of integrity and ethics that first drew me to the NFU. It is what I am proud to see is still driving our members today as we look to the future. But I would be remiss if I moved on from reminiscing about our 50th Anniversary Convention without saying thank you to everyone who worked to plan and pull off the event, and to all of the speakers and attendees who made it such a joyous occasion. The spirit and enthusiasm for this community we have built for ourselves really shone through. I am very grateful for the sense of renewal and solidarity it gave me.

We are going to need that enthusiasm and energy soon, because we are engaging in another tough fight for the future of our farms. At Convention we launched the NFU’s newest report, *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis*, written by Darrin Qualman. We got a very positive reaction from the members in attendance as well as from members of the media both at Convention and in the following month. This report is going to form the basis of a campaign to engage farmers across the country, to transform Canadian agriculture into a low-emissions, low-input system which will bring power and financial stability back to our

farms. It is no easy task, but the NFU has always been an organization with a progressive viewpoint and we are not afraid to ask the hard questions.

We have more resources now to engage in this Climate Leadership campaign, as we welcome our new Executive Director, Mara Shaw, and begin our engagement campaign across the country in coalition with like-minded and supportive allies. This year’s NFU Days membership outreach will involve raising awareness of a series of events we will be holding in Region 8, Region 7 and Region 1 in late February and early March. Please call the office in Saskatoon at 306-652-9465 or email nfu@nfu.ca if you are interested in participating in this targeted outreach.

A number of other hot topics in agriculture were debated at Convention and resolutions directing the NFU to continue our work on seed sovereignty and the financial issues facing farm families were passed. Many members raised the issue of access to local abattoirs, and the scope and national scale of this problem is becoming urgent. We have a lot of work ahead of us this year, but I have every confidence that we are going to carry forward the values and principles of the National Farmers Union, and have a lot of fun, too!

—In Solidarity, Katie Ward



A Message from Coral Sproule, NFU National Women's President

Greetings! This is my first report since the National Farmers Union 50th Annual Convention convened in Winnipeg, Manitoba - the location of our first convention as a union in 1969. Despite the current feelings of hopelessness experienced by many here, by our comrades in La Via Campesina across the globe, and the news each day of yet another catastrophic event related to climate change, I still found a feeling hope, unity, and inspiration among our members at convention as they face our farm and climate crises head on.

Our Women's Caucus met at convention, and was the largest attendance of recent years. Nearly 50 of us gathered to share our common challenges, our personal struggles, and our hopes for our work in solidarity with one another as we head into a new era. One of the recurring themes of some panels, and also in our discussion at the caucus meeting, was one of the increased and ongoing need to find better mental health supports for all rural people, and farmers in particular. Facing mental health challenges in our family has been a constant struggle in our rural context, as isolation and lack of services and support compound the already challenging times we

face. A special thank you to those who were able to pull together a resolution that passed on seeking better systems, supports and coverage for mental health and wellness.

One thing we recognized in the women's caucus meeting was that we never have enough time during our brief time at convention to more deeply connect and explore how we can truly support one another throughout our seasons. There arose a distinct desire to have more dedicated time to meet as a caucus to focus in on and develop these strategies together. We will be working to try to encourage more informal regional and local gatherings of this sort throughout the year. We are also hoping to plan at least a full day (hopefully more!) women's meeting before our 2020 convention in Saskatoon next fall.

I returned home with some amazing reading in tow. I was fortunate to get copies of Annette Desmarais' book, *Frontline Farmers, How the National Farmers Union Resists Agribusiness and Creates Our New Food Future* (Fernwood Publishing, 2019), which was launched at convention. As with her previous books on Food Sovereignty and La Via Campesina, this is a must have book for inspiration as it discusses the work of farmers and peasants who are working towards food

sovereignty for all communities. I also snagged a copy of Darrin Qualman's *Civilization Critical, Energy, Food, Nature and The Future* (Fernwood Publishing, 2019) which is an important book for our movement. In the women's caucus meeting we had some great enthusiasm over the desire to have a virtual book club of sorts, which could possibly serve as a tool for discussion and for in-person gatherings as well. Stay tuned for future reports on the books we read!

I wanted to take this opportunity to briefly introduce our new Women's Vice President, Bess Legault. Bess is a farmer and community organizer from Fort St. John, British Columbia and grows vegetables in the Peace River Valley (NFU Region 8). Bess presented on a panel at convention on some of her ongoing work in her community and in the Peace Region of B.C. We are so happy to have Bess on the board and her enthusiasm has been infectious from the start. To learn a bit more about Bess, visit our Women's Advisory page on the www.nfu.ca website or better yet, contact us to join one of our upcoming women's caucus calls as we tackle some of our work together. We look forward to the year to come, and hope that we can connect in some way with one another over the course of the coming year and beyond.

—In Solidarity, Coral Sproule



A Message from Stuart Oke, NFU National Youth President

It is with a renewed sense of excitement that I write to you all today, as I am feeling rested and rejuvenated after a little holiday break. I hope everyone found some time over the holiday season for some celebration with family and/or friends as well as some time for reflection on the year to come. In many ways the past year has been about reflection for the NFU - what we have done, how we have done it and what we need to do better. In 2019, on top of our mountain of regular work and advocacy, we signed a new agreement with Region 3, celebrated our 50th anniversary and hired a new executive director.

The 50th Annual Convention itself was a profoundly hopeful one for me – with the usual spirited debate on resolutions, the successful passage of a constitutional amendment which recognizes non-familial ‘Farming Units’ as members, and the release of our climate report. *Tackling the Farm Crisis and Climate Crisis: A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farmers and Food Systems*, is an amazing report authored by former NFU staff member Darrin Qualman. The report explores the relationship and draws a connection between the causes of the farm income crisis and the climate crisis and discusses solutions for farmers of all types by way of steps we can take to increase revenues and limit the greenhouse gases produced on our farms.

As climate change brings ever more severe consequences to our farms and our society, it was clear from our convention that there is a will and a pressing need in agriculture for an unapologetic and substantive response to the crisis. The membership gave a clear mandate to the board to stay the course, to help farmers to navigate this uneasy time and over the next couple years to try and chart a course which can serve to mitigate the effects of climate change and address the on-going farm income crisis affecting farmers across the country.

Convention organizers invited Avi Lewis and James Hutt, staff members at The LEAP, to come to convention and introduce/flesh out what a green new deal for farmers might look like. Broadly, the Green New Deal is a concept which calls for a holistic solution to problems, recognizes the urgency of the moment in the need to fight climate change and calls for a systemic and transformative change to meet that moment. It is a democratic process which calls for the people closest to the problem to be leaders in addressing it and in envisioning the solutions needed to realize them.

Following a resolution passed at convention, which called on the NFU to engage with the Green New Deal Process, youth members have been participating in calls to strategize how we can use our expertise to bring value to the larger conversation around a Green New Deal in Canada and to ensure farmers have a voice at the table to shape the end result. It is our hope

this work will dovetail nicely with the other climate related work the NFU is undertaking.

In the coming months we have a jam packed schedule within the NFU. We are all pushing to get planning and work done before farmers head back into the fields in the springtime. Region 3 held a youth convergence in January which built on the success of last year’s convergence. This one day event brought together young farmers from around Region 3 to network and learn from each other. In early February, on Agriculture Day, we will officially launch our report and the climate change partnership we have created. The small group is called Farming Climate Solutions and will be an important advocacy vehicle for us to use to build support for climate change action. In addition to this, there are plans for the three NFU presidents to travel to Regions 7, 8 and 1 to further introduce our report and undertake membership development activities within those regions. Stay tuned to the NFU website and social media for more information on dates and locations.

I look forward to updating you on these and a number of other initiatives in our next *Quarterly*. Until then I hope everyone stays warm and keeps the snow piled in the right place as we head into the coldest months of the year. I will be hunkering down over the next couple weeks in front of a spreadsheet to try to finish up my crop plan and seed order for the 2020 season.

—In Solidarity, Stuart Oke



Introducing Mara Shaw, NFU Executive Director

waste in soils and groundwater across the US.

Mara moved to Kingston, Ontario with her Canadian husband in 2000, where she served as the Watershed Management Coordinator at the Cataraqui Region Conservation Authority, managing planning, engineering and flood control. A year in England opened her eyes to the power of working with good food. She took over as the Executive Director of Loving Spoonful, a local fresh food organization and built a team that changed the way Kingston thinks and talks about the food system.

Mara volunteers with NFU Local 316, serves on a number of boards, plays cello, gardens

voraciously and loves fundraising and public speaking. She has two daughters: one at UBC, the other at Carleton.

"I've been in the ED role for just a week, but every experience reinforces my commitment to the NFU. The Board is brilliant, the staff are smart and dedicated, and the pressing issues demand that we work collectively and effectively. For 50 years the NFU has led a fight for farmers; soil, seed and farm sovereignty; farm incomes; and sustainable farms. Canada needs the NFU to lead right now. I look forward to working with you to provide that leadership, driven by my deep respect for each one of you NFU members."

The NFU welcomes a new Executive Director. Mara Shaw is a fierce advocate for food & farming. She grew up outside of St. Louis, Missouri, attended the University of Illinois in Chemistry and the California Institute of Technology in Environmental Engineering Science for a Master's degree. She worked on hazardous

Recognition of the NFU's 50th Anniversary Year recorded in Hansard at the Manitoba Legislature

On November 27, 2019, one day after our 50th Anniversary Convention in Winnipeg, the NDP Agriculture Critic, MLA Daljeet Brar gave recognition to the National Farmers Union's commemoration. All members of the Manitoba Legislative Assembly (MLA's) stood and applauded our accomplishment while our members stood with a left fist raised in solidarity to our past and future efforts.

The message is recorded in the Manitoba Legislature's Hansard at:

<https://bit.ly/2uZH5i6>



Members who were able to make the commemoration were (from left to right): Lance Loree, Terry Boehm (former president), Toby Malloy, Anastasia Fyk, Anterra Vsetula-Sheffield, Madeline Marmor and Dean Harder.

On the Frontline of the Climate Emergency and in Creating a New Future

Farmers on the Front Line was the theme of the National Farmers Union 50th Annual Convention in Winnipeg in November, 2019. As Dr. Ian Mauro said during the Wednesday morning panel on the climate emergency:

“ **Farmers are currently on the front line in dealing with the climate emergency and in creating a new future for our food and agricultural systems.** ”

The 50th Convention also saw the release of the NFU's provocative and thought-provoking discussion paper - *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis: A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farmers and Food Systems*.

The three panelists on the Climate Emergency panel were **Dr. Greg Flato**, Senior Scientist at Environment and Climate Change Canada, **Dr. Ian Mauro**, Executive Director of the Prairie Climate Centre at the University of Winnipeg and **Darrin Qualman**, former NFU Director of Research, author of *Civilization Critical: Energy, Food, Nature and the Future*, and lead author and researcher of the NFU's *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis* discussion paper.

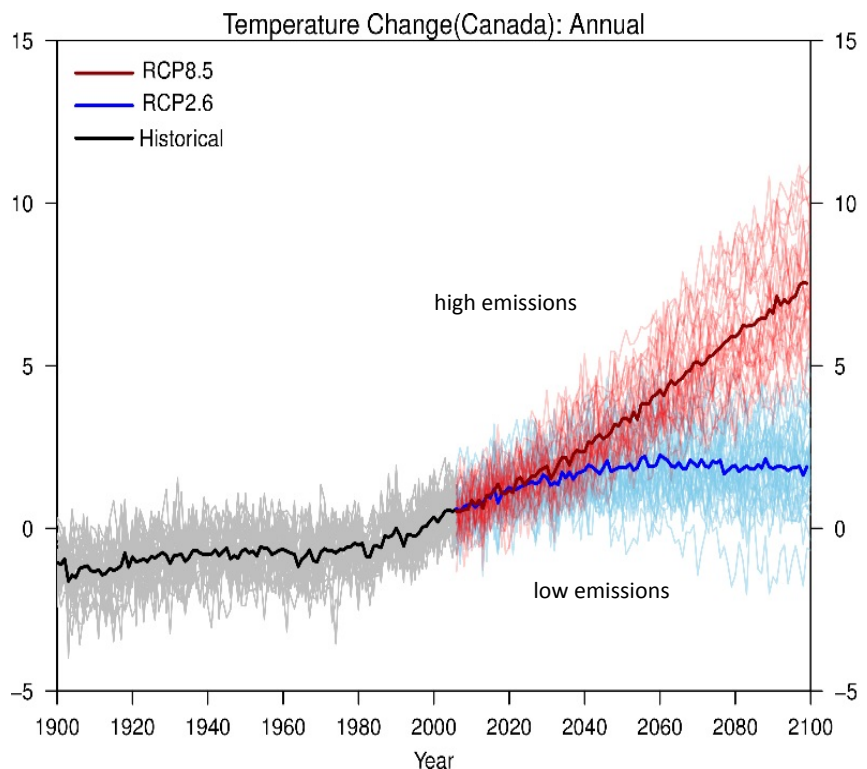
Dr. Greg Flato is based in Victoria but was raised on a farm in Alberta. He described his presentation as a high level overview of what is changing at the large scale in terms of climate and what that means for Canada. The information in his presentation is based on *Canada's Changing Climate Report* produced by Environment and Climate Change Canada and available at <https://changingclimate.ca/CCCR2019/>. He said that a series of reports are coming which will delve more into the implications for different regions, health, transportation and so on.

Observational data shows that the global mean surface air temperature has increased by 1°C since 1850 and Dr. Flato said we understand why. Observational data also shows the concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere has increased since 1960 and continues to increase at a steady rate. Once again, we understand why it is increasing -

because of human activities - especially the combustion of fossil fuels, although land use changes like the conversion of forest to crop land also contribute. Carbon dioxide is not the only greenhouse gas, but it is by far the most abundant.

At a global level temperatures are not changing uniformly. For example, high latitudes are

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warming more than the tropics and land is warming more than oceans. Similarly in Canada, the warming is not uniform with more warming in the north and in the prairies. The annual average temperature in Canada increased by 1.7°C between 1948 and 2016, but northern Canada has warmed by 2.3°C. This warming is effectively irreversible and as long as CO₂ is put into the atmosphere the earth will continue to warm. If the rate of adding CO₂ to the atmosphere slows down then the rate of warming will slow down, but temperatures will only stabilize if the net change in CO₂ in the atmosphere becomes zero. To have net zero CO₂ all the CO₂ added into the atmosphere has to be removed annually.

The effects of global warming in Canada include more extreme heat, less extreme cold, longer growing seasons, shorter snow and ice cover seasons, earlier spring peak streamflow, thinning glaciers, thawing permafrost and rising sea levels. The more the climate warms, the more these effects will intensify.

The global emissions of CO₂ from human activity will largely determine how much warming Canada and the rest of the world will experience in the future. Under a low emissions scenario, an additional warming of about 2°C is projected by mid-century with temperatures steady after that. Under a high emissions pathway with no attempt at mitigation and continued growth in CO₂

The science is clear, so the question is when do we start to act?

emissions, there will be a profound change in the climate with continued temperature increases. Models show the temperature increase under a high emission scenario reaching 6°C by late century and the warming will continue to be strongest in winter and in places like northern Canada. According to Dr. Flato, the future climate of Canada depends on what happens with global emissions from now on and his maps indicate two very different futures for Canada.

Dr. Mauro said that we have understood climate change and the science behind it for a long time. The science is clear, so the question is when do we start to act? He said that we need to figure out how to take decades of science and translate it into something that people actually support so that they will push for bold action. The Prairie Climate Centre works with communities to tell stories and get the message out.

Dr. Mauro believes the cattle industry has been unfairly demonized in the discussion of greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. He says he knows a lot farmers who work really hard to protect the land but everyone keeps saying meat is the problem. So one of the tools he has put together is a short video with two

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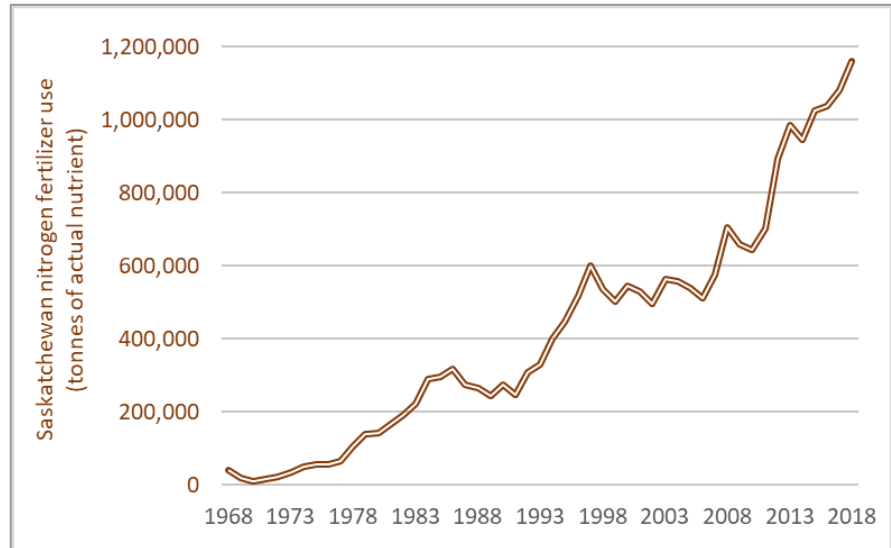
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cattle farmers who talk about rotational grazing, improving the grassland, carbon sequestration, and how animal agriculture can be a part of the climate solution. It is just one of a series of videos from across the country available from the *Climate Atlas of Canada*. Launched in April, 2018 as a public tool, *The Climate Atlas of Canada* "combines climate science, mapping and storytelling to bring the global issue of climate change closer to home for Canadians." It is available at <https://climateatlas.ca>.

Darrin Qualman suggested we do not have a climate crisis but a crisis of civilizational structure. He said that prior to the 20th century every natural and human system moved material in a circle, whether that be carbon, water, nitrogen, seeds or fertility. In the 20th century humans took these circular systems, cracked and stretched them open to make them linear, and began stuffing massive quantities of energy, fuel and materials in one end and blowing massive quantities of stuff out the other end. This linear flow structure is causing a number of problems, including climate change.

Nitrogen fertilizer use in Saskatchewan



Nitrous oxide also contributes to climate change. Qualman said that agricultural emissions in Canada have increased by about 25% since 1990 and that the increase is largely driven by the manufacture and use of nitrogen fertilizer. For example, nitrogen fertilizer use in Saskatchewan has doubled since 2007 and quadrupled since 1991. According to Qualman agriculture does not produce greenhouse gas emissions, rather it is agricultural inputs that produce greenhouse gas emissions. He said that for the first 10,000 years of agriculture

there was no problem but after a hundred years of high input agriculture we now have a massive emissions problem. To reduce emissions, he said we need to reduce inputs. As farmers move to reduce inputs we can also increase net farm incomes. Qualman sees the climate crisis as a unique opportunity for farmers to break free of the grip of corporate input suppliers and to reimagine a completely restructured food and farm system in Canada. ▪

The National Farmers Union would like to thank the following organizations for their sponsorship support of our 50th National Convention!

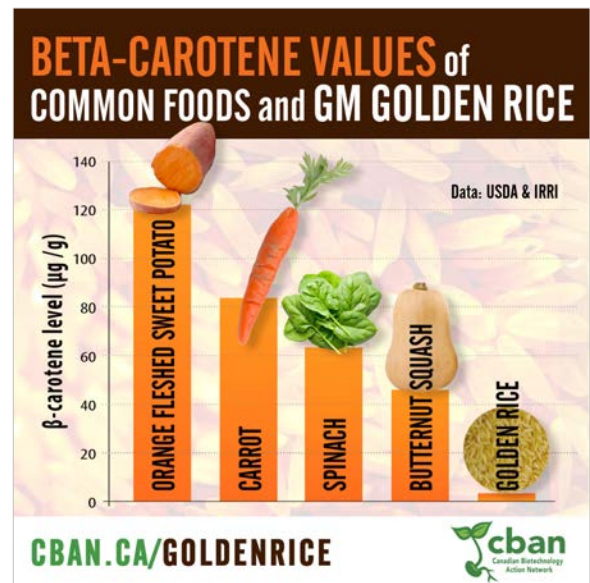
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 Canadian Organic Growers

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 Public Service Alliance of Canada
 Canadian Labour Congress

Golden Rice Update

— by Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator,
Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN)

Golden Rice is the name of a controversial rice that has been genetically engineered (genetically modified) to produce beta-carotene, which the body can convert into vitamin A. Its proponents say it can be used to address vitamin A deficiency, or VAD, in communities facing malnutrition and food insecurity. Its critics say it is an ineffective and dangerous technology that is more about promoting genetic engineering than genuinely addressing the problem of hunger.



The development of Golden Rice began twenty years ago but it was only recently approved as safe for human consumption in the Philippines, the first country targeted for release. The decision by the Government of the Philippines follows a **safety approval by Health Canada** as well as by regulators in the US and Australia/New Zealand (assessments that were conducted despite the fact that none of these other countries will sell or grow the rice). However, no country has yet assessed its potential to combat VAD, or approved the rice for cultivation.

If Golden Rice gets all the approvals it needs for growing and distribution, it could be the first GM rice on the global market and the first nutritionally-enhanced GM food. Many farmers' organisations in Asia are actively working to prevent it from being released because **they are concerned about the impacts on their seed systems.**

Rice is the staple food for people across Asia and can be compared to the importance of wheat for Canadian farmers and consumers. Proponents of Golden Rice argue that, because rice is largely self-pollinating and its pollen doesn't remain viable for long, GM rice will not contaminate other varieties. However, gene flow can occur from GM rice to wild and weedy rice, and accidental mixing is predictable.

CBAN's latest research confirms that, despite the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars so far, Golden Rice still has technical flaws. The levels of beta-carotene documented in Golden Rice remain low and variable, and studies show that it can lose all, or almost all, of its beta-carotene in storage and cooking. Additionally, vitamin A can only be absorbed by the body when it is consumed along with fat – something that people suffering

from VAD often don't have readily available in their diets.

Vitamin A deficiency is a symptom of hunger and malnutrition, which is caused by poverty and inequality. The real solution lies in approaches that give people access to diverse and healthy diets with vitamin-A rich foods, and the means to grow them. **Just half a cup of most local green leafy vegetables is enough to meet the required daily amount of vitamin A for adults and children.** "Promoting readily available, diverse and safe Vitamin A food sources from sustainable and ecological farming is the long term solution to combat malnutrition, ensure food security and health, not genetically modified crops like Golden Rice," says Cris Panerio of the farmers network MASIPAG in the Philippines. MASIPAG is part of a pan-Asian network of more than thirty groups called the *Stop Golden Rice! Network*. ▪

For references, see CBAN's full factsheet on Golden Rice at www.cban.ca/GoldenRiceReport2019 or see the two-page summary and updates at www.cban.ca/GoldenRice

Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis: A Short Summary

The National Farmers Union's new report, *Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis: A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farmers and Food Systems*, by Darrin Qualman, is an in-depth examination of the impacts of climate change on agriculture in Canada, as well as the opportunities for agriculture to be part of the solution.

This report considers both the impacts of the climate crisis on agriculture and the financial realities of farm families.

KEY CONCLUSIONS INCLUDE:

- The climate crisis is a threat, but also an opportunity to re-orient our farms to become more integrated, life-sustaining and community-sustaining.
- The farm crisis and the climate crisis share many of the same causes – and solutions.
- The climate crisis will increasingly affect Canadian farms' ability to produce food.
- The priority must be to incentivize low-input, low-emission agricultural approaches.

The NFU is proud of this report, as it provides one of the most comprehensive analyses of the linkages between agriculture and climate change written to date in Canada.

The climate crisis

6.4 degrees Celsius. That's the amount of warming that may ravage many areas of Canada this century -- unless we do something. This report outlines how farm families can contribute.

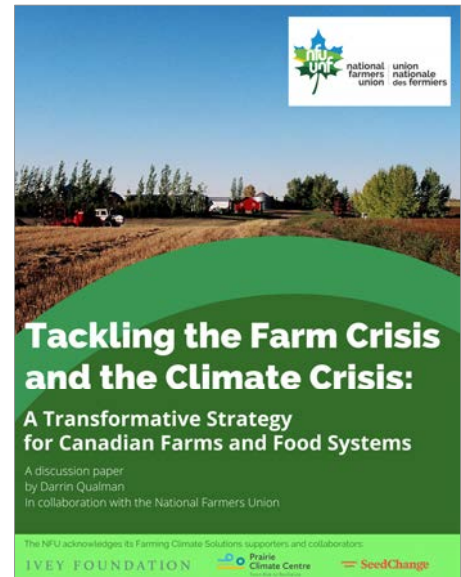
The climate crisis is real, unfolding rapidly, causing destruction, and accelerating. If we do not change course its effects will be devastating. Unless Canada and all other nations rapidly reduce emissions — by restructuring our energy, manufacturing, transportation, communication, and food systems — we will drive temperatures upward so far, and destabilize the climate so much, that our societies and ecosystems will be massively damaged. Farming and food production in many areas of Canada will be severely affected, with a negative impact on the entire economy.

The farm crisis

We also have a farm crisis. Canadian farm debt has nearly doubled since 2000 and now stands at a record \$106 billion. Over the last three decades, the agribusiness corporations that supply fertilizers, chemicals, machinery, fuels, technologies, services, credit, and other materials and services have captured 95% of all farm revenues, leaving farmers just 5%. Even during the relatively good times since 2007, the majority of farm family household income has had to come from off-farm work, taxpayer-funded support programs, and other non-farm sources.

High input costs, low margins and net incomes, and expensive land and machinery have led to an expulsion of farm families from the land, with one-third leaving in the past generation. Worse, Canada has lost over two-thirds of its young farmers since 1991. Unless Canadian agricultural policies are wholly restructured there may be just 100,000 farms left by mid-century and the sector may come to be dominated by huge operations.

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The climate crisis *and* the farm crisis

But these worst-case scenarios do not have to come to pass. They will if farmers, other citizens, and our elected leaders do not act. But we have alternatives. We can change course. We can build a future that includes family farms, vibrant communities, and a habitable climate. The journey toward a better future begins with a key insight: **the farm crisis and the climate crisis share many of the same causes, and many of the same solutions.**

At the core of agricultural policies in Canada and many other nations is a focus on maximizing agri-food production and exports – but this has also led us to maximize

agricultural inputs. Farmers have been pushed to adopt a maximum-output, maximum-input production approach. Fertilizer, chemical, fuel, machinery companies and banks have been the primary beneficiaries of Canadian agricultural wealth creation. Over the past generation they have captured 95 cents out of every dollar farmers received from the market. This threatens to drain and collapse the family farm sector by 2050.

So, where's the good news? It begins with the knowledge that a focus on high-output, high-input agriculture is the primary cause of both the farm crisis and the increase in agricultural greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The emissions from our farm and food systems are simply

the outputs of the petro-industrial inputs we push in. Pushing in millions of gallons of fossil fuels results in millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide. Apply megatonnes of fertilizers and produce megatonnes of nitrous oxide. Thus, as we reduce farm input use we can increase net farm income *and* reduce GHG emissions.

The solution to the farm crisis and to the climate crisis to a large degree are the same: decrease dependence on high-emission petro-industrial farm inputs and increase reliance on ecological cycles, biology, energy from the sun, and the knowledge, wisdom, and judgment of farm families on the land.

Low-input agriculture: toward solutions to the climate and farm crises

Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis also contains detailed plans for easing both crises through on-farm measures and government policies that can reduce Canadian farm GHG emissions by 30% by 2030 and perhaps by 50% by 2050. These include:

- Reimagining Canadian agriculture by adopting an approach on sustainability, reducing inputs and attendant emissions, raising farm incomes, and increasing the number of farms and farmers.
- Diversifying production by supporting alternatives such as organic, holistic, and agroecological production systems.
- Increasing the efficiency of fertilizer production and use, maximizing natural sources of fertility, reducing fertilizer consumption, and providing alternatives to purchased inputs.
- Encouraging cover crops, intercropping and multi-cropping, and enhanced rotations.
- Shifting as much as possible to electricity by looking at electric farm machinery.
- Increasing efficiency of all on-farm energy use and retrofitting homes and farm buildings.
- Maximizing on-farm renewable-energy production as well as locally and co-operatively owned large-scale solar and wind power projects.
- Reducing food waste, minimizing over-processing and junk food, rethinking biofuels, and looking critically at bioenergy and biomaterials schemes.
- Minimizing transport distances and rejecting both redundant shipment to over-centralized processing and distribution centres and the excessive focus on exports.
- Shifting some land into set-aside programs, ecological reserves, and alternative land use systems; reversing the destruction of forests, tree bluffs, shelterbelts, and wetlands.
- Better managing manure, reducing emissions from that source.
- Rethinking cattle production to maximize the benefits of soil carbon building, healthy grassland ecosystems, sustainable mixed farms while taking steps to deal with methane emissions.
- Minimizing the global oil-and-gas sector's methane releases to make emissions space for cattle and other ruminants.

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- Opening a conversation with farmers to consider how a carbon tax might be applied to agricultural inputs in a way that supports farm incomes; incentivizes a move toward low-input, low-emission approaches; rewards those who invest in emission-reduction technologies and retrofits; and helps speed a transition to sustainable production systems.
- Creating a Canadian Farm Resilience Administration (CFRA) research and extension agency to help farmers protect soils, land, water, and our food-production capacities; support alternative land use, and assist in the mobilization needed to meet our emission-reduction targets and stabilize our climate.

Farmers have a choice: take an active, lead role in discussions and implementation of emissions solutions, or cede control to others. As our country works to cut its emissions by 30% or more by 2030 and to net zero by mid-century, agriculture, like other sectors, will have to make transformative changes. The physics of the atmospheric systems forces us to realize that business as usual is not an option.

Our last chance to save the family farm

The policies and measures in this report will raise concerns for many. What impacts will new approaches, government policies, taxes, and regulations have on their fragile financial positions? How can cash-strapped farmers find money to invest in new technologies and machinery? How can we transform and restructure agriculture when many of us are struggling just to stay afloat? We do not discount these uncertainties and fears nor underestimate the challenge, but the scale of the threat means that rapid, aggressive action is far better than inaction.

The NFU has drawn a roadmap intended to protect farm families, ecosystems, and future generations. We have done our best to chart a course into the future, but our journey is not without perils, uncertainties, costs and sacrifices. These, however, will be far lower than the cost of inaction or inadequate action— and far lower than the costs of climate chaos and scorched fields.

Low-input agriculture can free farmers from the profit-extracting embrace of corporate input suppliers, reduce costs, increase net farm incomes, and reduce

emissions. At the heart of this report is a radical idea: though a threat, the climate crisis is also an opportunity. It forces change upon us, and this creates perhaps our last chance to save the family farm by providing the opportunity and reason to partially unhook from the corporate input suppliers that are draining our farms and rural communities of their financial lifeblood and their populations.

We need to act now

We have known about climate change for decades. For example in 1988, Canada hosted the world's first large-scale climate conference that brought together scientists, experts, policymakers, elected officials, and the media. We are now in the fourth decade of the climate crisis.

In a February 2003 report to Canada's Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry the NFU concisely outlined the problem. Our conclusion then remains true today:

"It is impossible to overstate the importance of taking swift action to deal with human-induced climate change."

Although transformative change to cut emissions and stabilize our climate brings risks, it also opens the way for rewards. The necessary changes ahead bring the possibility of refocusing our farm and food systems—away from the push to increase yields, production, exports, and trade and toward increasing farm incomes and the number of people on the land taking care of the soil, water, and other species. **We are looking at a future wherein agriculture must increasingly re-merge with nature and culture to create a much more integrated, life-sustaining, and community-sustaining agroecological model of human food provision, nutrition, and health.** So do not imagine the current world with some emissions-lowering techno-tweaks or some solar-panel incentives. Imagine a transformed world. This report is an initial roadmap to begin to navigate that transformation. •

***Tackling the Farm Crisis and the Climate Crisis:
A Transformative Strategy for Canadian Farmers and Food Systems***
is available to download from the NFU website at:

www.nfu.ca/publications/tackling-the-farm-crisis-and-the-climate-crisis/

If you would like a printed copy, please contact the NFU national office.
We would be happy to send you a copy.



Report of the North American Youth Articulation Meeting

—by Geneviève Lalumière, *Union Paysanne*¹

Thirty young people from seven organizations in the North American region (Canada, United States and Mexico) of La Via Campesina (LVC-NA) and the People's Agroecology Process met at the second meeting of the North American Youth Articulation. The event was hosted by La coopérative Ferme Terre Partagée in the Pleasant Ridge farming community in Rogersville, New Brunswick, November 11 to 15, 2019.

It was three days of workshops, discussions and visits. Youth gathered with the intent to enhance their collective capacity

to transform food, farming and rural culture, towards agroecology and food sovereignty at local, regional and international levels.

Housed with members of the local Acadian farming community, the meetings were held in the local community centre and each workshop was prepared and facilitated by a pair of participants. Two cultural evenings were held, allowing participants to share the particular Acadian culture and history, which is coloured by the peasant resistance to the British invasion and its alliances with the First Peoples.

Participants were invited by the Mi'kmaq Ground Eel First Nation to visit the Natoaganeg Community Food Center, which allowed them to understand that it is simply essential to meet, communicate and exchange if one wants to participate in a healthy process of decolonization and reconciliation. During the visit, delegates were able to understand the place of wild meat, particularly moose, in the community's food sovereignty. Hunting and preparation is carried out with the utmost respect for the sanctity of the food.

(continued on page 15...)

The youth drafted a final declaration with the following calls to action:

1. *We call on our organizations, LVC, and our wider communities to fight for true solutions to the climate crisis and utilize Just Transition to ensure no one is left behind. We call for the implementation of holistic, contextually situated solutions led by frontline communities to disintegrate the powers of colonialism and extractive capitalism.*
2. *It is unanimous among LVC youth that agroecology is a path towards food sovereignty and freedom. We call on our organizations to participate in this formative international encounter, and for our wider communities to support this vital work.*
3. *We recognize the desperate need for Land and Agrarian Reform.*
4. *We need support in accessing land, moving beyond land ownership, restructuring the economy, and decolonizing our food system. We call for reparations and return of stolen land to bring greater equity and justice.*
5. *We call on our nations to enshrine UNDROPⁱⁱ in national law.*
6. *We call on our organizations, LVC, and our wider communities to move beyond gender binary and to fully recognize and celebrate the wisdom that comes with diversity.*

Behind the scenes, methodology and logistics teams worked together and horizontally with youth from across the region to create an event that resembled them for several months before the event.

It has been really beneficial to work to bring LVC-NA and the People's Agroecology Process (PAP)

closer together. Many of the peers involved in the youth articulation are also involved in the PAP, which facilitates the natural linkage. The youth want to work together more in this direction, in order to build a coherent and action-oriented region, centered around agroecology and people's food sovereignty.

The education sessions focused on climate justice, agrarian reform and access to land, peasant rights and popular peasant feminism, in addition to several discussions on the functioning of the movement and the vision young people want for the future.

Connecting the youth from around the region has several outcomes for the health of the movement: creating a sense of camaraderie makes it easier to communicate at a distance later on; it facilitates collaborative links; and it builds a stronger movement where the people who form it know they can count on each other. This is precisely what young people in North America are building: a united region where different organizations help and support each other in their different struggles as well as in their common struggles.

We have also seen that the industrial monopoly of agriculture and trade is an issue that affects young people in all three countries. Several young people have chosen, according to their interests and knowledge, to get involved in one of the five Working Collectives in the region. ■

Geneviève currently lives in the Nitassinan, also called the Côte-Nord of the province of Québec. She is a wild medicinal plant gatherer and a northern seed saver. She currently coordinates the International Committee of Union Paysanne and the Agroecology School Centre Paysan. Geneviève represents the North American region in the international Agroecology, Seed and Biodiversity Collective of LVC, and represents La Via Campesina in the Agricultural Biodiversity Working Group of the International Planning Committee for food sovereignty.

**ATTENTION
REGION 5 (MANITOBA) MEMBERS**

NFU Region 5 Annual Convention

will be held

Saturday, April 4, 2020

Little Britain United Church Hall

Lockport, Manitoba



Watch your mailbox for more details or call Ian Robson, Regional Coordinator, 204-858-2479.

- i Union Paysanne and NFU are the two Canadian members of LVC.
- ii UNDROP is the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas

Therefore be it resolved....

Resolutions passed at the NFU's 50th Annual Convention

November 25th to 27th, 2019 – Winnipeg, Manitoba

1. SALE OF HOPPER CARS

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU request the federal government disclose and justify by direct means and by way of an open letter, the process by which they “sold” the federal government hopper cars to the railway below salvage cost as was reported in farm media.

2. AGRISTABILITY

WHEREAS the Harper Government drastically reduced the benefit to farmers available through the AgriStability program;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU urge the federal government to renew the AgriStability program benefits to at least pre-2012 levels.

3. CETA CHAPTER 26

WHEREAS the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) has recently had so-called Investor State Dispute Settlement mechanisms modified with the addition of Chapter 26, titled “Joint Committee”, and WHEREAS this committee gives the E.U Trade Minister and Canadian Trade Minister the power to interpret CETA and to exercise exclusive interpretations and binding application of all their decisions on all parties and total jurisdiction over new issues;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU demand the government of

Canada negotiate that Chapter 26 “Joint Committee” of Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) be removed.

4. CLIMATE EMERGENCY

BE IT RESOLVED the NFU recognizes that there is a climate emergency, and we call on all levels of government in Canada to immediately do the same and take appropriate binding action to avoid the devastation and destruction of our farms and food systems.

5. CIGI AND CEREALS CANADA

WHEREAS CIGI is an invaluable marketing tool for Canadian grain producers, and

WHEREAS the industry-dominated ‘Cereals Canada’ is in negotiations with CIGI re consolidation, and

WHEREAS this gives input suppliers power over the users of their products and is a clear conflict of interest;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU vigorously oppose the amalgamation of Canadian International Grains Institute (CIGI) and Cereals Canada or any other dilution of CIGI authority.

6. CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

WHEREAS Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is endemic in North American wildlife (in cervids and other mammals), and

WHEREAS three nations, including Norway have banned

Canadian canola meal imports to avoid CWD;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU demand the federal and provincial governments take all measures to contain the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease and undertake research to eliminate it.

7. LOANS FOR NEW FARMERS

WHEREAS the FCC offers interest only loans to some established farmers that are able to access collateral through prior land ownership, and

WHEREAS truly it is passionate and establishing farmers that need the greatest access to funds;

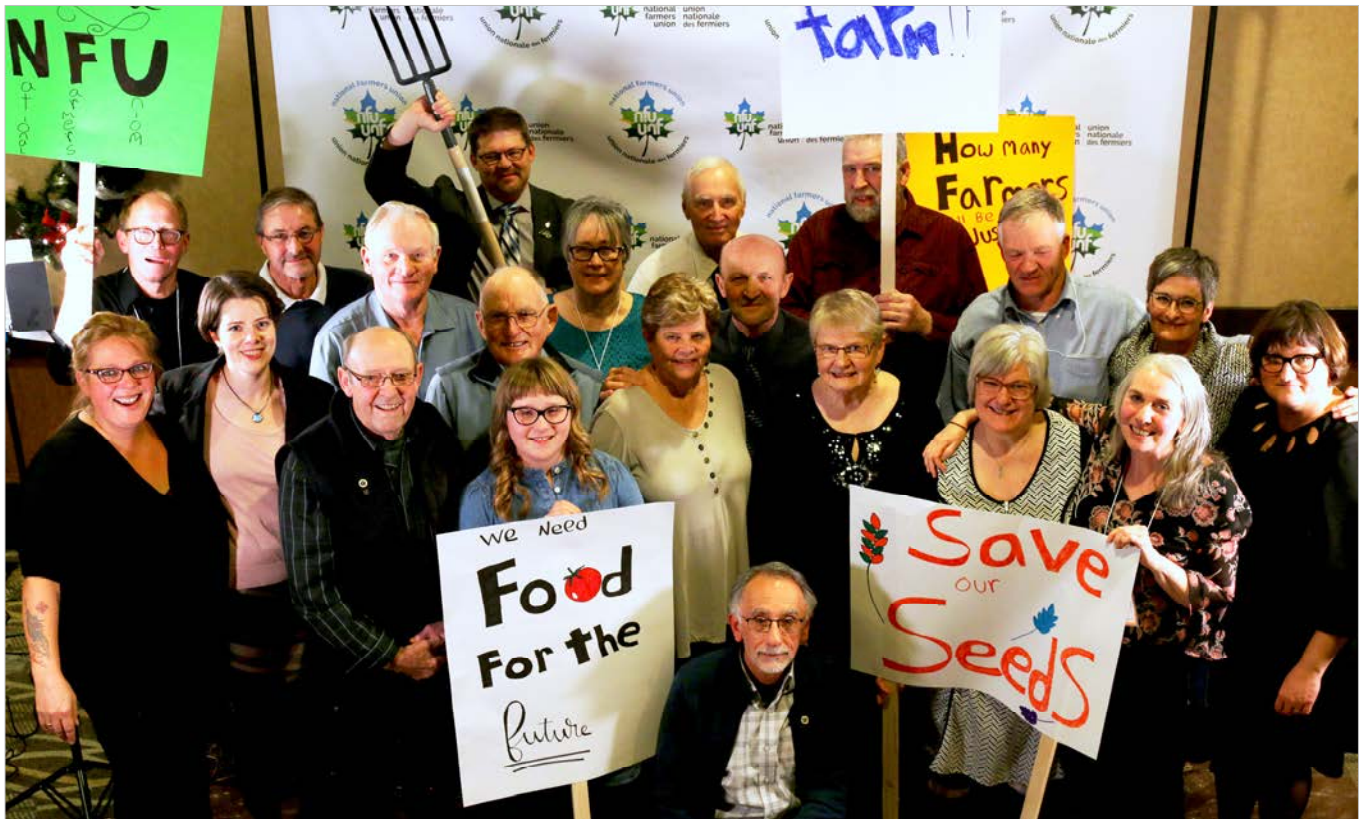
THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU lobby the federal government to get Farm Credit Canada (FCC) to offer specific interest only loans, already accessible by some established farmers, to approved dedicated new farmers who show a passion and long-term interest in farming.

8. CARBON FOOTPRINT OF BEEF PRODUCTION

WHEREAS there has been a lot of claims made about the carbon footprint of beef production and major food corporations are using this to heavily promote beef substitution,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU caution the uncritical acceptance of claims made about the carbon footprint of

(continued on page 17...)



Farmers from across Alberta (Region 7) bring their insight and expertise to the NFU 50th National Convention.

beef production (which fails to distinguish between intensive industrial beef production and family farm and small scale holders beef production) and major food corporations that use this to heavily promote beef substitution and urge the scientific evaluation of beef production systems including the use of land not so suitable for grain.

9. RIGHT TO REPAIR FARM EQUIPMENT

WHEREAS many manufacturers are finding ways to prevent owners from repairing their purchased equipment unless it has gone through the companies' specific service providers, and

WHEREAS many farmers can live quite a distance from their nearest repair facility;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU fight for the "Right to Repair" farm equipment items

without being forced or threatened, through means such as loss of warranty, to only go through a manufacturer approved repair service in order to repair items on machinery;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the NFU call upon farm equipment manufacturers and our governments who oversee farm equipment manufacturing standards to ensure and legislate that all vital repair and service manual information regarding highly electrically monitored and controlled farm equipment be available to farmers so that farmers have the ability to do equipment repairs in a timely and cost-effective manner.

10. URBAN FARMING

WHEREAS urban farming is a necessary part of food sustainability in Canada,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU support, encourage or lead

on policies that give opportunities for safe, sustainable, urban farming.

11. SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF SEED VARIETIES

WHEREAS funding for public plant breeding is being threatened,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU continue to encourage the Federal Government to support public ownership of plant breeding and not introduce either a trailing royalty or an end point royalty option on seeds.

12. WATER AND WETLANDS CONSERVATION

WHEREAS water management is a major concern in Canada, and

WHEREAS source water protection and wetlands conservation are essential for a healthy environment;

(continued on page 18...)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU promote the need to conduct and appropriately act upon cumulative environmental impact assessments of agricultural drainage.

13. FARM DRAINAGE

WHEREAS farm drainage has significant local and regional impacts;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU take steps to document, analyze, and raise the profile of associated agronomic, economic, environmental, and public policy implications of drainage.

14. CARBON LEVY REBATE

WHEREAS the federal government acknowledged the uniqueness of food production by exempting farm-used fuel from the carbon levy, and

WHEREAS fuel used in on-farm grain dryers was not included in the exemption;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU request that the federal government provide a rebate of the carbon levy on farm-used fuel used for grain drying operations.

15. CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD

WHEREAS the undemocratic removal of the Canadian Wheat Board continues to cost farmers billions of dollars annually, and

WHEREAS farmers in Canada have sustained financial losses that is devastating rural Canada and our rural communities, and

WHEREAS single desk selling and collectively bargaining is democratic right of Canadians;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the National Farmers Union immediately organize a high-pressure campaign to demand that single desk selling of wheat and barley be immediately restored in Canada.



Region 1 Women's Advisor Carina Phillips and son Remy Petrie.

16. FARM INCOME SUPPORT

WHEREAS, the China/United States trade war has undermined the largely-integrated North American canola, soybean, beef, and pork price complex, and

WHEREAS, the U.S. government has responded to this conflict by subsidizing its canola, soybean, beef, and pork producers with

(continued on page 19...)



What joy! Saskatchewan (Region 6) farmers enjoy each other in Winnipeg and bring so much knowledge to convention.



NFU Manitoba (Region 5) board members Dean Harder and Ian Robson

assistance currently of \$12 billion (U.S.) in 2018 and \$18 billion (U.S.) so far in 2019, and

WHEREAS, the response of the Canadian government to the financial injury of lower prices, lost sales, and stock liquidation being faced by its producers is negligible, and

WHEREAS, Canadian agriculture trade success in the context of trade agreements is demonstrating inherent weakness as witnessed in Canadian beef, pork, sheep, and goat capitulation to COOL in the 2000's and neglecting to fully pursue the WTO case of pepper dumping into the Canadian market by Holland, and

WHEREAS the NFU has approved a resolution that identifies the degree of injury sustained by Canada's producers sends the clear message to its trading partners that Canada does not support its farmers to the effects of illegal trade actions, and

WHEREAS, these combined factors and the Canadian government's response to the injury sustained by Canada's producers sends the clear message to its trading partners that Canada does not support its farmers to the effects of illegal trade actions;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the NFU requests the government of Canada compensate Canadian agricultural producers to the same degree that their competitors in the U.S. have realized, per acre and/or per head, as the first step in a comprehensive risk management program, and that the compensation plan be drafted and implemented quickly.

17. FOSSIL FUEL DIVESTMENT

WHEREAS the climate emergency is the biggest threat to the future of humanity, and

WHEREAS the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) warns we have only 10 years left to prevent an irreversible climate catastrophe, and

WHEREAS farmers and Indigenous communities are on

the front lines of climate change, and

WHEREAS severe climate change would destroy the lands and livelihoods of farmers around the world and produce hundreds of millions of climate refugees, and

WHEREAS the NFU, as a founding member of La Via Campesina, has a moral duty of solidarity with farmers and peasants in the Global South, and

WHEREAS fossil fuel corporations have known about climate change for decades, but have used their money to fund climate denial, lobby against renewable energy, and undermine unions and social movements, and

WHEREAS many institutions, universities, and union pension funds are invested in the fossil fuel industry, and

WHEREAS divestment is a powerful tool for justice used successfully in the struggle against apartheid, among other movements,

(continued on page 20...)



*Presidential Summit: NFU Presidents Past and Present
Stewart Wells, Katie Ward, Nettie Wiebe, Cory Ollikka, Terry Boehm, Coral Sproule, Jan Slomp and Art Macklin.*



Apparently being an Ontario (Region 3) NFU member is particularly hilarious. We're so glad you all came!

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the NFU commit to fossil fuel divestment and encourage our members to divest from the fossil fuel industry; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the NFU call on other unions, organizations, and institutions (including universities, credit unions, and the CPP) to divest from the fossil fuel industry in solidarity with farmers in Canada and around the world.

18. 4 PER 1000 INITIATIVE

WHEREAS climate scientists of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported in 2018 that humanity has twelve years to keep global warming at a maximum increase of 1.5C or the effects of global warming will greatly worsen, and

WHEREAS the huge amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere by human activities is a major contributor to global warming, and

WHEREAS increasing the storage of carbon in the soil by .4% per year would reduce the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, and

WHEREAS farmers have the ability to sequester carbon by implementing and maintaining regenerative agricultural practices that build organic matter in the soil, thus preventing detrimental levels of global warming and ensuring food security;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU examines partnering with the 4 per 1000 Initiative to promote and educate farmers on regenerative and sustainable agricultural practices that combat global warming and ensure food sovereignty.

19. GREEN NEW DEAL

WHEREAS we as a union have declared a climate emergency, and

WHEREAS the NFU is the only member-based agriculture organization in Canada engaged in real, just climate solutions, and

WHEREAS if we decline to engage in the food and agriculture policy discussions relating to the climate emergency, they will go on without us, and

WHEREAS at this critical juncture we must continue to seek collaboration with allied

organizations and movements to develop comprehensive, inter-sectional climate solutions;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU engage with and define food and agriculture policy within an emerging Green New Deal framework.

20. BOLIVIAN COUP

WHEREAS US imperialism and local far-right oligarchs have orchestrated a coup d'état in Bolivia, and

WHEREAS although there are legitimate concerns about the democratic process and rule of Evo Morales, his government remains the only democratically-elected government of Bolivia, and

WHEREAS Indigenous peoples and peasants compose 75% of the population in Bolivia and are being targeted by horrific campaigns of violence, and are not represented in the self-constituted government, and

WHEREAS La Via Campesina has condemned the coup and the NFU stands in solidarity with all peasants in the world, including in Bolivia;

(continued on page 21...)

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED the NFU condemns the fascist and violent coup that is threatening the lives and livelihoods of peasants and Indigenous peoples in Bolivia, and calls on the Canadian government to denounce the self-constituted government and demand an immediate return to the democratic process; and furthermore that we call on the United Nations (UN) and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) to investigate the violence and human rights violations that are taking place, and to safeguard both democracy and justice in Bolivia; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the NFU condemn the role of Canadian extractivism in Bolivia, and advise the Canadian government not allow mining interests to impede democracy; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call on the Canadian media to accurately and transparently document and disseminate information about the events unfolding in Bolivia.

21. MENTAL HEALTH

WHEREAS the personal is political and the high incidents

of suicide and mental health crisis in rural Canada is the result of internalized oppression as a result of the consolidation of corporate farming, and

WHEREAS social and economic unrest and uncertainty and the depopulation of rural communities and increasing isolation of farmers is leading to high stress and mental health challenges, and

WHEREAS the need to be a part of an accepting community is crucial to health and wellbeing;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the NFU develop ways to support members' mental health and social connection, as well as adding counselling coverage to the NFU health benefits available; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the NFU advocate for publicly funded Medicare coverage of mental health services that meet the needs of farmers and rural people.

22. NATIVE GRASSLANDS

WHEREAS native grasslands are the most endangered ecosystem; and

WHEREAS grasslands are vital to the health of wildlife and planet; and

WHEREAS the grasslands are repositories of endangered biodiversity;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the NFU lobby for the halting of any new cultivation of, and development on, native grasslands.

23. GROCERY

WHEREAS the human rights record throughout the entire food chain of Wholefoods, owned by Amazon, has been found to be the worst in the supermarket industry in both the European Union and the United States, and

WHEREAS there is no significant study done on supermarket supply chains in Canada, and

WHEREAS over 98% of food sales in Canada are done in supermarkets;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED the NFU commit to research on the supply chain of Canadian supermarkets and call on supermarket owners to pay prices that allow their suppliers to maintain safe and equitable working conditions for all farmers and workers. ▪



The lovely and smart folks from Manitoba (Region 5) enjoy the 50th National Convention in their own province.

The Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

The National Farmers Union would like to congratulate **KOLBY PETERSON**, winner of the Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing. Kolby farms, dreams, and writes on Wildwood Farm near Pouce Coupe, BC, on Treaty 8 land. Together with her mentors and friends, Tim and Linda Ewert, she is working to co-create a co-operative and intergenerational farm. They are endeavoring to find more farmers for their human team, while using their Percheron horse team whenever possible to complete work at a joyful and non-industrial pace. Kolby works with Young Agrarians, and helped plan the North American La Via Campesina Youth Gathering in New Brunswick this past November. Kolby is celebrating her 1 year membership anniversary with the National Farmers Union.



— Hope Beneath Our Feet —

Like any dying language, the remaining speakers are too often silent, or silenced. Should we choose to listen, we may hear their fluency through their tongues, but only the observant sees their language written on the land. This language is the relationship between humankind and Earth of a reciprocal kind - a relationship that models how living a human life can be a generative force and does not have to deplete the very entity necessary for life. Earth is our lifeline, yet it is the planet that is growing sick so economic health can be bolstered, the planet whose climate is unravelling into chaos because of unbridled greed and lack of foresight, the planet who sustains all life but whose pulse will grow weak should we continue living at her expense.

Thick-tongued, clumsy speaker that I am, I understand that learning this language may be the most important task of my time, for all human beings to participate,

for all beings' sakes. As one of many farmers in this world, we certainly have the capacity to write and share a different story, should we find the collective will. Let this story first be one of remembering a language of regeneration, then of fluency in generative living. Let it be one that the land will illustrate, and hopefully the climate heeds. Let this be the honorable legacy of farmers.

What could this story look like? Mother Nature has 4.5 billion years of research and development under her belt. She is an expert in generative existence, where life flows into life, where synergy and abundance abound, and where perfection is an inherent quality designed into natural processes and cycles. Let her be our guide and inspiration for the design of our agroecosystems.

No singular technological messiah exists as a fix-all. Leaking carbon dioxide into outer space, or pumping it below ocean floors, are propositions born from the same

mentality as the one that is creating this crisis. Rampant consumption and competitiveness remain unquenched, global economies remain dependent on a paradigm of growth that cannot be sustained, and the majority of the perpetrators pushing agendas of the aforementioned paradigm remain untouched by the consequences of the crisis they are perpetuating. Nothing short of a global socio-economic restructuring seems to be in order to fight the climate crisis as well as the ethical and moral crisis we are steeped in. Daunting though this seems, let us not underestimate or undervalue what farmers are capable of in using the wisdom of the land, the genius of roots, and the science of soil.

Farmers are truly in a unique position to build and transform soil capable of sequestering and stabilizing carbon. Rather than looking skyward for ethereal solutions, I propose humbly

(continued on page 23...)

bowing our heads and examining the hope beneath our feet. If we want the soils to do the behemoth, herculean task of absorbing the atmospheric carbon responsible for climate chaos, our partnership with soil must be reciprocal. We must give back. No longer can we force function these agricultural ecosystems by conscripting thousands upon thousands of acres into producing maximum bushels for commodity markets. Farms cannot survive on intravenous chemical inputs; they really do need to feed themselves. If degenerative systems continue to act as the legs propping up farms and soil continues to be an externality, our partnership is failing. Let us farm like soil matters, with living roots in the ground, with polycultures and perennials, with minimum soil disturbance, and with integrated livestock.

Our farms must not only feed themselves, but the community surrounding them. Economies shrinking to a bioregional scale may just be the richest thing our communities can endeavour in. We can rejuvenate our rural

communities, providing pride and purpose in meaningful work through growing grass roots and grassroots movements where young people see that greener pastures can be found right outside the farmhouse door. Let us know our neighbours, nourish one another, and build the communities we really want to live within.

Farmers must relinquish the idea that we need to walk the front lines alone. Less than 2% of this nation's population farms, and this small number of people cannot uphold the amount of attention, diversity of skills, and love that it takes to manage complex agroecosystems properly. This climate crisis asks for more people with intimate relationships with the land, who feel the land as an extension of themselves, who know every knoll and heave. The masses grow food for the masses, rather than the few growing for the many. The community takes on the risks and the rewards of the farm. Let us find insurance in one another.

A properly grazed and rested pasture; a strategically placed

nitrogen-fixing shelterbelt; a swamp left intact and fenced off from livestock; or soil with enviable aggregates full of mycorrhizae - these don't exactly demand headlines or evoke noble imagery of what being on the front lines look like. However, the solutions to climate crisis are as diverse as the lands upon which we farm and may combine the radically ordinary with the extraordinary. We are being called to try. Let us heed this call.

What does learning a language of generative farming entail? Perhaps asking, first, what is needed of us on this land, and then listening deeply. We might be asked to reimagine how we live and work, and should we boldly show up as we are needed amidst our climate crisis, our legacy will stretch well beyond the farm gates. It will be written on the land and span many generations. This critical and subtle language will be passed on, and it will say that we stood not only at the front lines of a climate crisis, but for the future of all things. ▪

The Beingessner Award is part of the NFU Youth's Campaign for New Farmers, and is given to the authors of the best 500-1000 word essay on agriculture and food issues in Canada. The theme of this year's essay was *What does farming in a changing climate look like to you?*

The Beingessner Award is named after Paul Beingessner of Truax, Saskatchewan, who passed away in the spring of 2009 in a tragic farm accident. Paul was born on April 26, 1954, and returned to the family farm after obtaining his BA (Hon) in Psychology in 1976 and working with youth in Regina for a few years. Described as the "godfather of modern shortline railways" by former NFU President Stewart Wells, Paul was instrumental in the founding of Saskatchewan's first shortline railway, Southern Rails Co-operative, and served as general manager from 1991 to 1997. When he left Southern Rails, he stayed on as a board member, and worked with the Ministry of Highways Short Line Advisory Unit supporting other efforts of farmers to start shortline railways. Since 1991, Paul wrote a weekly column on farming and transportation issues with a social justice focus featured in papers across Western Canada. After leaving the government in 1999, his expertise on transportation issues resulted in consulting work across Western Canada and the United States. Beingessner also served as a Sask. Wheat Pool Delegate from 1996 to 1998, was an ardent supporter of the CWB and ran for the position of director in 2008.

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NFU CONVENTION AUDIO RECORDING ORDER FORM

NFU 50th NATIONAL CONVENTION, November 25th to 27th, 2019 – Winnipeg, Manitoba

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CD NO.	Circle the CD Number you wish to order	# of CDs
1	Welcomes, Greetings, Opening Address (November 25)	
2	<u>Session 1: Farmers on the Frontlines</u> <i>Randall Affleck, Pat Atkinson, Laura Larson</i> (November 25)	
3	<u>Session 2: In Union, Strength</u> <i>Past NFU Leaders moderated by Jessie MacInnis</i> (November 25)	
4	<u>Reports: Board, Women's, Youth, National Farmers Foundation, IPC</u> (November 25 & 26)	
5	<u>Public Session: Avi Lewis</u> (November 25)	
6	<u>Session 3: Building for a Better Future</u> <i>Nettie Wiebe, Coral Sproule, Stewart Wells</i> (November 26)	
7	<u>Session 4: Emerging Issues</u> <i>Terry Boehm, Bruce Campbell, Syed Hussan</i> (November 26)	
8	<u>Session 5: What would a Green New Deal for farmers look like?</u> <i>Facilitated by James Hutt</i> Beingessner Award Presentation (November 26)	
9	<u>Session 6: On the front line of the Climate Emergency</u> <i>Greg Flato, Ian Mauro, Darrin Qualman</i> (Nov. 27)	
10	<u>Session 7: Looking 50 years ahead</u> <i>Aric McBay, Byron Beardy, Bess Legault</i> (November 27)	
11	Auction, Installation of Officers, Closing Address (November 27)	