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A Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

– by *Ann Slater*

Here I sit at my computer in the middle of the day in the final days of June, trying to get a break from building up heat in my body working in the fields. A look at Environment Canada's Public Weather Alerts page, shows there are heat alerts in every province and territory except Newfoundland and Labrador and Nunavut. But these heat alerts are not all the same. The hot, humid weather outside my door, is "normal", one of many run-of-the-mill hot, humid days we are likely to experience in southwestern Ontario every summer. All I can think is, at least it

only "feels like" 40 C, it is not actually 40 C, let alone 42 C or 44 C or 50 C. Try as I might I cannot imagine what it must be like for farmers in western Canada under an all-time record-breaking heat dome. How do market gardeners and vegetable/fruit farmers manage to harvest their crop this week? How do dairy farmers stand to milk their cows? And what about the losses of livestock, poultry and crops, let alone people, wildlife and plants?

Meteorologists are clear this extreme heat event is directly related to climate change and we



should expect more such events in the future. The highlights of an NFU brief which critiques the proposed federal offset credit and trading system in this issue of the UFQ, continues the NFU's important work to push policy makers to implement policies which will decrease greenhouse gas emissions. The key idea in the brief is that "it is right to incentivize and support farmers to improve soil health and levels of soil organic matter and carbon. It is wholly wrong to see these on-farm activities as somehow offsetting fossil fuel emissions."

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A Message from **Katie Ward**, *NFU President*

In the past year, I have had the extraordinary privilege of witnessing NFU members telling their stories. It sometimes strikes me that we rarely think about the “little” things we do every day - the annoyances and the frustrations - the little victories - the moments of beauty that catch our breath. We enjoy them, or we endure them, and sometimes we even share them with friends or family over a meal when we are talking about our day. But within our community, those everyday stories about life in agriculture do not always feel that extraordinary. And yet as I have watched and listened to NFU members telling

their stories to politicians or reporters or webinar audiences, there is a palpable respect for the authenticity farmers bring to the greater story of agriculture and the way it is both affected by and impacts on our society at large. Your experiences on the farm, as you are growing food and raising animals, form the worldview that encourages you to care about issues around seed, livestock, land access, and how people are treated in our communities. Caring about fairness in the food system pushes you to join a committee advocating for change or writing a policy resolution your NFU region can push forward at a convention. Advocating for change might mean writing an op-ed to your local paper or a national agricultural publication, asking for an engaging speaker from the NFU for a community meeting to generate volunteers

for a postcard campaign, or writing a letter to your MP, MLA or MPP about a piece of legislation or the regulations affecting your farm. It is inspiring to watch resolutions written by NFU members five or ten or even fifteen years ago turning into government legislation that will make a difference in peoples’ lives because people like you worked together as a movement to make change happen.

Our farms all look very different – different crops, different animals, different geography and ecosystems – but they all share a common thread: Farms need farmers. And farmers have a story to tell. Your stories are important; they are how you make a difference in the world.

In Solidarity,
Katie Ward

Un message de **Katie Ward**, présidente nationale de l'UNF

Au cours de l'année écoulée, j'ai eu l'extraordinaire privilège de voir des membres de l'UNF raconter leur histoire. Je suis parfois frappé par le fait que nous pensons rarement aux “petites” choses que nous faisons chaque jour. Les contrariétés et les frustrations. Les petites victoires. Les moments de beauté qui nous coupent le souffle. Nous les apprécions, ou nous les supportons, et parfois même nous les partageons avec nos amis ou notre famille autour d'un repas lorsque nous parlons de notre journée. Mais au sein de notre communauté, ces histoires de tous les jours sur la vie en agriculture ne semblent pas toujours aussi extraordinaires. Pourtant, lorsque j'ai vu et écouté des membres de l'UNF raconter leurs histoires à des politiciens, des journalistes ou des auditoires de webinaires, j'ai constaté un respect palpable pour l'authenticité que les fermiers apportent à la grande histoire de

l'agriculture et à la façon dont elle est affectée par notre société en général et dont elle l'influence. Vos expériences à la ferme, lorsque vous cultivez des plantes et élevez des animaux, forment la vision du monde qui vous encourage à vous intéresser aux questions relatives aux semences, au bétail, à l'accès à la terre et à la façon dont les gens sont traités dans nos communautés. Le souci de l'équité dans le système alimentaire vous pousse à vous joindre à un comité qui milite pour le changement, ou à rédiger une résolution politique que votre région de l'UNF peut faire avancer lors d'un congrès. La promotion du changement peut se traduire par la rédaction d'un article d'opinion dans votre journal local ou dans une publication agricole nationale, par la demande d'un conférencier de l'UNF pour une réunion communautaire afin de recruter des bénévoles pour une campagne de cartes postales, ou par la rédaction d'une lettre à

votre député fédéral, provincial ou provincial au sujet d'une loi ou d'un règlement qui touche votre ferme. Il est inspirant de voir des résolutions rédigées par des membres de l'UNF il y a cinq, dix ou même quinze ans se transformer en une loi gouvernementale qui fera une différence dans la vie des gens parce que des gens comme vous ont travaillé ensemble en tant que mouvement pour faire des changements.

Nos fermes sont toutes très différentes - différentes plantes, différents animaux, différentes géographies et écosystèmes - mais elles ont toutes un point commun : Les fermes ont besoin des fermiers. Et les fermiers ont une histoire à raconter. Vos histoires sont importantes ; c'est ainsi que vous faites la différence dans le monde.

En solidarité,
Katie Ward



A Message from **Bess Legault**, *NFU Women's president*

Solstice is a wonderful time of year to celebrate our accomplishments, the hard work we pour into our land, families and relationships to get us to this time of year and the peak of daylight. Carving time out of my very full life to celebrate our accomplishments is something I find difficult to consistently do. As I grow stronger connections and freely discuss my inner thoughts with my peers, I have discovered that I am not alone in the habit of overfilling my plate and this has

inspired me to intentionally carve the time out to celebrate my own and others accomplishments. For what is life but a series of hard work which should be celebrated? Without the celebration it is just a laundry list of tasks accomplished and a feeling of never quite being enough.

The National Farmers Union has had many successes to celebrate in 2021! Inspired by our female president Katie Ward, our diverse group of members, board members and staff have worked diligently to advocate on behalf of agricultural climate issues and flexible universal child care by effectively carving out meeting times with Federal MP's across the country. Our advocacy

and dedication to ensure the voice of our membership is heard at these tables has been rewarded with federal budgets allocating support for climate solutions in agriculture and a National Child Care Plan.

I am so proud to be a member of the NFU and stand beside a diverse group of farmers willing to have a voice for the changes we are starting to see supported by our federal government.

In Celebration,
Bess Legault
Women's President
National Farmers Union

Un message de **Bess Legault**, présidente des femmes de l'UNF

Le solstice est un merveilleux temps de l'année pour célébrer nos réalisations, le travail acharné que nous consacrons à nos terres, à nos familles et à nos relations pour se rendre à ce temps-ci de l'année et aux journées les plus longues. Se réserver un peu de temps dans une vie déjà remplie pour célébrer nos accomplissements est quelque chose que je trouve difficile de faire régulièrement. À mesure que je crée des connexions plus solides et que je discute plus librement mes pensées profondes avec mes pairs, j'ai découvert que je ne suis pas seule avec cette habitude de trop remplir mon assiette et ceci m'a inspiré à l'intention de prendre du temps pour célébrer mes accomplissements et ceux des

autres. Autrement, de quoi est faite la vie, sauf une série de travaux difficiles qui devraient être célébrés ? Sans célébration, c'est seulement une longue liste de tâches accomplies et un sentiment de n'en jamais avoir assez fait.

L'Union nationale des fermiers a connu plusieurs succès à célébrer en 2021 ! Inspirée par notre présidente féminine, Katie Ward, notre groupe diversifié de membres, de membres du CA et de notre personnel a travaillé avec diligence pour revendiquer sur les enjeux climatiques agricoles et pour la prestation universelle flexible pour la garde d'enfants en organisant des périodes de rencontres avec les députés

fédéraux à travers le pays. Nos revendications et notre dévouement pour s'assurer que la voix de nos membres soit entendue à ces tables ont été récompensés par des budgets fédéraux qui prévoyaient du soutien pour des solutions climatiques en agriculture et un Plan national de garderies.

Je suis tellement fière d'être membre de l'UNF et d'être debout parmi un groupe de divers fermiers désirant faire entendre leur voix pour les changements que nous commençons à voir au gouvernement fédéral.

En célébration,
Bess Legault
Présidente des femmes



A Message from **Stuart Oke**, *NFU Youth President*

It is that time of year when many of our youth members withdraw onto their farms and busy themselves with the sometimes relentless work of the farm. Our conversations grow briefer and usually involve rushed descriptions about how to deal with pests or circumstances which we have never encountered before.

I know for me personally its been a spring which has been filled with building projects as we grow our

farm and put up infrastructure which will serve our business into the future. It is a spring when I have been especially grateful for the NFU community and the friends and mentors I have found here who are often only a phone call away with often needed and always appreciated advice.

Despite the busy time of the year NFU business and work continues on. I am forever grateful for our truly wonderful staff who, in these busy summer months keep the NFU on track and continue the critical work that we do. I personally have been so impressed by the essential work and advocacy around the climate crisis the NFU has undertaken and as a result of NFU work, in partnership with others, to see a new federal investment in

agriculture to help support farmers adopt the practises that will make us better leaders in the race to mitigate the climate crisis. The inroads we have made with the government on this file have certainly increased our visibility within the government and reopened doors with decision-makers that have been closed the past few years. While the climate crisis is not the only important file the NFU has been engaged on it remains an important gateway for us to bring our other files to the attention of politicians. I hope everyone weathers this summer well and I look forward to seeing many of you in the fall!

In Solidarity,
Stuart Oke

Un message de **Stuart Oke**, président de la jeunesse de l'UNF

C'est le temps de l'année où plusieurs de nos jeunes membres se retirent sur leurs fermes et s'occupent du travail parfois sans relâche de la ferme. Nos conversations deviennent plus brèves et comprennent normalement des descriptions rapides sur comment s'occuper des espèces nuisibles ou bien de circonstances que nous n'avons jamais rencontrées auparavant.

Pour moi, personnellement, ce fut un printemps remplis de projets à mesure que l'on agrandit la ferme et que l'on installe de l'infrastructure qui va desservir notre entreprise à l'avenir. Ce fut un printemps quand j'ai été surtout reconnaissant pour la communauté de l'UNF, les amis et les mentors que j'ai découverts ici et qui ne sont souvent pas plus

loins qu'un coup de téléphone et souvent ayant des conseils nécessaires et toujours très appréciés.

En dépit de la période achalandée de l'année, les affaires et le travail de l'UNF continuent tout de même. Je suis éternellement reconnaissant à notre personnel vraiment merveilleux qui, durant ces mois d'été si occupés, garde l'UNF sur la bonne voie et continue le travail essentiel que nous accomplissons. J'ai été si impressionné par le travail essentiel et les revendications sur la crise climatique entrepris par l'UNF et, grâce aux efforts de l'UNF en partenariat avec d'autres, de voir un nouvel investissement du fédéral en agriculture afin d'aider et appuyer les fermiers à adopter des

pratiques qui vont faire de nous de meilleurs chefs de file dans la course pour atténuer la crise climatique. Les avancées auprès du gouvernement sur cet enjeu ont certainement augmenté notre visibilité au sein du gouvernement et rouvert des portes d'accès aux décisionnaires qui étaient fermées durant les dernières années. Bien que la crise climatique ne soit pas le seul dossier important dans lequel l'UNF soit impliquée, elle demeure une passerelle importante nous permettant de véhiculer nos autres enjeux auprès des politiciens. J'espère que tout le monde va passer un bel été et j'ai bien hâte de vous voir, tous et toutes, à l'automne !

En solidarité,
Stuart Oke



An Introduction to **Annette Aurélie Desmarais,** National Farmers Foundation Board Member

When I heard that the National Farmers Foundation (NFF) was looking for a board member, I immediately sent in my letter of interest. I have been involved in the NFU for some decades now, and it has always struck me that the NFF has a critical role in supporting the progressive farm movement in Canada. I was absolutely delighted when I was asked to join the NFF board in April to work collaboratively with Michelle Melnyk (Chair), Yuill Herbert, Glen Koroluk and Kalissa Regier. It is a real privilege and honour to join such a great team of smart, committed, highly-skilled, talented and hard-working activists who also all have a wonderful sense of humour. Since the board requested that I write a short piece for the UFQ to introduce myself, here goes!

I grew up on a farm near Cut Knife, Saskatchewan and although I spent some years travelling to different countries and working in various places across Canada including doing research to help set up a women's centre in the Yukon and working in a bookstore and WHTV in Whitehorse, a fish plant in PEI, a

grocery store in Labrador, and a cooperatively owned restaurant in

Vancouver, I eventually came back to Saskatchewan to farm with my sister for over a decade. We started off as conventional cattle and grain farmers, but we became vegetarians, stopped raising cattle, and then we went organic. That was way before organic farming became more popular.

My journey with the NFU began when I first met several NFUers who were part of the Oxfam Farmers Brigade to Nicaragua in the late 1980s. This led me to become coordinator of the Global Agriculture Project whereby Oxfam-Canada hired me to facilitate the building of links between the NFU and counterparts in other countries. The NFU's international connections contributed significantly to the emergence of La Via Campesina in 1993. As coordinator, I also provided technical support to La Via Campesina for another five years.

I then embarked on a scholar activist path by pursuing participatory research with La Via Campesina and obtaining a PhD in Geography. This research was captured in my book *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants* (2007), also released in French, Spanish,

Korean, Italian and Portuguese. My first job as an academic was at the University of Regina (2004-2013) in

the Department of Justice Studies and International Studies Program. Subsequently, I was appointed as Canada Research Chair in Human Rights, Social Justice and Food Sovereignty at the University of Manitoba. In this position, I have conducted research on various aspects of food sovereignty in Canada and elsewhere. More recently, my research has included analyzing the changing land tenure patterns on the prairies.

Over the years, I have had the great pleasure of working with activists, students and scholars from various countries. Collectively, we have produced four books on food sovereignty and social movements, the most recent one being *Frontline Farmers: How the NFU resists agribusiness and creates our food future* (Fernwood Publishing 2019).

I very much look forward to working with the NFF, in collaboration with the NFU, to support and strengthen the progressive farm movement in Canada. I do hope that my background, skills and knowledge as a farmer, activist and researcher will be put to good use. We've got some exciting times ahead of us!



Regional Reports

Region 1, District 2 – Province of New Brunswick – by Suzanne Fournier, Executive Director

The NFU-New Brunswick held its annual general meeting on April 10, 2021 via Zoom. The Hon. Margaret Johnson, NB Minister of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries welcomed members to the meeting and answered questions from the group. No resolutions were brought forward. After the organizational business was completed, member-at-large Aaron Shantz led a kitchen table style discussion. Participants talked about strategies to attract new members, what kind of benefits the organization could consider offering, and trying to have diverse perspectives from different commodities in the organization and the Board. The group was small and the meeting concluded early, due to the unseasonably warm weather.

The NFU-NB took part in the Future of Food Mi'kma'ki project, organized by How We Thrive. The Future of Food exercise gathered

together 30 people who are actively working towards sustainable, equitable food systems. We crafted compelling, plausible scenarios about the future of food in our region in four cohorts. The process was compelling and used storytelling to create dialogue and connected Indigenous and non-Indigenous people from a variety of backgrounds.

On June 23, 2021 the NFU-NB presented to the Standing Committee on Climate Change and the Environment, an all-party committee of the Legislative Assembly of New Brunswick, regarding pesticide and herbicide uses. Herbicides including glyphosate, continue to be sprayed aerially in the province by the forestry industry. Grassroots organizations such as Stop Spraying New Brunswick have called for a ban on aerial forestry spraying, expressing economic and ecological concerns over the practice, and New Brunswick First

Nations have also called for a ban. The NFU-NB will speak about the history of agricultural pesticide / herbicide use and the danger of neonicotinoids to pollinator species.

The NFU-NB is pleased to announce that with the National office, we have hired a Communications Specialist through Canada Summer Jobs. Gillian Cormier, a local food activist and co-founder of the Lupine Market, has accepted the position. Gillian has experience in supporting an urban farm, environmental community development, and as a municipal climate change mitigation assistant. We look forward to working with Gillian this summer and to increasing our communications and project development capacities. We thank the National office for applying for the position and supporting us through the hiring process.



**NFU CONVENTION:
AGRICULTURE & THE COMMON GOOD**

Date: November 24 - 27

Stay tuned for more details!



Region 3: Province of Ontario – by Don Ciparis, Coordinator

The spring of 2021 presented Ontario producers with the same ideal tillage and planting conditions as they saw in 2020. The abundance of sunshine and very little rainfall made for practically ideal cropping conditions. Of concern though is that while last summer's near drought conditions, followed by a minimal rain and snow event winter and this spring's dry conditions have given members an ideal planting window, soil moisture concerns continue to be raised across the province, as elsewhere in Canada and the U.S. Many of the province's Conservation Authorities have already issued water level advisories for tributaries in their watersheds. And the summer has barely started.

A 6-inch snowfall in April 20-21 punished some early-planted crops in southern Ontario. Cold temperatures and overnight/early morning frosts took place in the first half of May, resulting in frost damage in vegetable and corn/soyabean/wheat crops in eastern and central Ontario which required replanting on a considerable scale in some areas. Producers are learning more about the relationship between critically low soil moisture levels and frost damage susceptibility.

On a lighter note, our Communications Co-ordinator

Ashlee Redmond organized a Virtual Farewell Party for our outgoing General Manager Sarah Bakker. Thanks again Sarah for all that you have brought to the NFU-O and the NFU. Our Human Resources Committee worked tirelessly through March and April to determine the skills needed, assess candidates and finally interviewed and hired an Executive Director to fill Sarah's position. Krista Long started work on May 3. She brings a wealth of experience from working in the agricultural non-profit sector. Welcome Krista. And thank you Aric, Brendan, Kate and Ken for your efforts, ideas and energy.

On April 19th, the NFU-O made a submission to the provincial government on the proposed expansion of the Greenbelt. Since 2018, the NFU-O has engaged in research and consultations regarding the potential expansion of Ontario's Greenbelt to protect more farmland and natural features – especially critical water sources, from development and climate change.

Our Abattoir Committee continues its work at finding solutions for the challenges livestock producers face in Ontario. OMAFRA has requested that the NFU-O designate a representative on its new Livestock Processing Capacity Working Group. James Morin of Verner has agreed to represent the NFU-O on the Working Group and we look forward to his updates of developments there, as he shares his knowledge of the Ontario livestock trade.

Provincial Council undertook a short Farm Labour Project Survey

this spring that made it clear that farmers and farm workers require support as they cope with the farm income/living wage crisis. Grants, loans and other financial tools were widely reported as key to the viability of many small and mid-sized farms in Ontario. Preliminary findings indicate a need for the NFU-O and other stakeholders to share information about grants and other funding opportunities and to advocate for strengthening existing programs. The short survey is a step towards consolidating the knowledge within and beyond our membership to ensure that farmers can have the best information to access funding, as well as identifying gaps in funding while advocating for solutions and continuing with research and resource-building for members to connect with funding opportunities.

The NFU-O is proud to announce the July release of our *Reframing the Farm Labour Crisis in Ontario* report. The input, knowledge and activities of hundreds of our members and other stakeholders makes it clear that together we can revitalize small-scale agriculture as an essential and economically-viable career path. The report identifies the problems and we will advocate for the solutions as presented in the report's recommendations.

Provincial Council has responded to a need for more gate signs for its members by allocating funds and sharing costs with locals. 500 signs have been ordered.

And with that, Provincial Council wishes you all a safe and enjoyable summer and bountiful fruits from your labours.

Don Ciparis
Region 3 Co-ordinator/NFU-O
President



Region 5: Province of Manitoba

– by **Ian Robson, Coordinator**

The National Farmers Union has very good analysis on the Canadian food system and on food policies which would allow more farmers rather than fewer. A lot of ink is splashed by those in the food system about the number of jobs supported by farmers. Well, the trend is to fewer farmers and fewer food processing jobs. Dedicated thinking and better policy could improve our farming and food system for the farmers and for the food eaters.

Measure your costs is an axiom well known to farmers, yet there are many costs that are excluded from this thinking, for example: the reduction of soil organic matter; fewer farmers upon the land with the corresponding loss of a knowledge base and a community support system; a loss of knowledge about plants and animals and hands-on experience; the loss of knowledge of how to work with natural systems to use beneficial insects, birds and wildlife to assist the survival of all life on earth, especially the soil, fungi and micro-organisms.

We are seeing many wetlands or wildlands being bulldozed so that huge equipment can pass, when a simple turn could have left great wild grass for grazing in a low spot. Instead of a drained wet spot or a spot which then becomes white with salts or alkali, let the grass grow. Markets and dollars are not the measure for the needed natural system. Thinking and wisdom are better. What benefit is salted land? Dr David Montgomery has plenty to say about this in his book *Dirt: The Erosion Civilization*.

A new book by David Rourke, an organic farmer from southern Manitoba, is a great read. *A Road to Fossil Fuel Free Farming* is a reflection of this farmer's experience, observations and objectives. He has a deep understanding of the need to use natural systems. He has set goals and has learned from many successful organic farmers. His book gives new meaning to the phrase 'show me the money'. Saving on expensive inputs and a good premium can really help out a farm. Read the evidence, be inspired, but each farm still has its conditions and this is why local knowledge is important. Mr Rourke has noticed the loss of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Program and agrees with the NFU call for a Canadian Farm Resiliency Agency, along with Best Management

Practices and support dollars to help farmers farm with less fossil fuel and help to rebuild our soil organic matter.

The National Farmers Union is suggesting a Royal Commission be struck by our federal government to investigate flaws in our Canadian food system which existed before but have been exposed by the COVID-19 effects on our food supply. A Royal Commission could have considerable power to investigate. It would need a competent person to lead it. It should travel across Canada to gather its findings and along the way engaging Canadians in a national discussion about the situation and future of Canada's food system. The Romanow Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada provides a good example of how to proceed.

The Manitoba Region 5 NFU Convention will be held on-line in a series of meetings under the theme *Farmers, The Public, and Their Governments*. We will discuss the climate crisis and farm policy, our Manitoba public education system, and farmers' stress.

Farm safely and in good health.

Ian L Robson
Coordinator MB NFU



Region 6: Province of Saskatchewan

– by **Dixie Green, Coordinator**

Region 6 board and advisory members have met monthly and have signed a letter composed by Glenn Wright and Bill Waddell to protest the treatment of the elementary students and teachers at Outlook, Saskatchewan. The students posted factual information about the effects of farming on a billboard outside the school. The school board removed the message and asked the students to apologize to farmers. Al Birchard is writing a separate letter from Region 6 to express our concern that the School Division deemed it necessary to issue a retraction and an apology.

In Swift Current, because of my involvement at First United Church and a book study of *A Good War* by Seth Klein, the church decided to sponsor letters to the Prime Minister, the Minister of the Environment and the Opposition parties, urging them to read this book. The book was given to every M.P. by Mary Jane Philp, a woman in Ontario that personally bought the books

and distributed them to help increase the leaders understanding of the climate crises that we face. The church in Swift Current sponsored the giving of this book to Premier Scott Moe, to the provincial Minister of the Environment, to our MLA, to Saskatchewan NDP Leader Ryan Meili, to the Leader of the Liberal Party and to the Mayor of Swift Current. The book study group, on behalf of the congregation, followed up with meetings with our MP, our MLA and the Mayor to ask for action to address climate change.

Al Birchard is writing to educate the public and elected officials on the development of the Lake Diefenbaker mega irrigation project. The NFU is concerned with the environmental consequences of diverting this water, the limited uptake of irrigation plus the \$4B expense to develop the project. The NFU would like to see this money redeployed and the project terminated. From a Saskatchewan perspective, Al submitted some background to Beth Legault, NFU Women's President, about the elimination of public transportation in this province. He asked why the Saskatchewan Party would prioritize the \$4B irrigation

project which benefits a handful of agriculture producers while denying a substantial way to connect rural and remote parts of the province at a cost of less than 1% of this mega project. The NFU are questioning the priorities of this government and continue to protest the mis-allocation of tax-payer money. Lyle Orchard has directed us to the Saskatoon Public Library website to see the talk on Small Nuclear Reactors (SMRs) by Ann Coxworth, an expert from Saskatoon who has been an active opponent of nuclear development for years. We encourage people to watch this lecture at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcKvaYO1-no&list=PLRUK7BHZUVfrHCXuJyBe001gjqBwseY&index=12>.

Now that COVID-19 restrictions are lifting, a picnic is proposed in later July at a park on Lake Diefenbaker. Members will be contacted and details worked out for an in-person visit.





Region 7: Province of Alberta – by Doug Scott, Coordinator

Mid-June finds the growing season in Alberta well underway. Seeding was generally early this spring and the crops are growing nicely. Helping things along has been sufficient rainfall. Overall the countryside looks lush and green. The hay cut is just beginning and the stands are lush.

I really want to thank all of the folk who have put such diligent thought and time into the many files that we in the NFU have open. As we enter the phase of transitional agriculture more will be asked of us, as it appears other agricultural groups fail to have a comprehensive view of what agriculture will look like in the future. One need only look at what is currently happening in the Southwestern United States as it faces a critical water shortage, a record drought and a record breaking heat wave - all at the same time. The hottest temperature I ever endured was around 45 C and that was riding a motorcycle across the desert in Nevada in a howling hot wind. They are forecasting highs of 127 F this week in the deserts of California, that is 53 C. I firmly believe the climate crisis is upon us. The Colorado river which supplies the cities of Las Vegas, Phoenix and Tuscon with water plus the Imperial Valley, where most US vegetables are grown, no longer reaches the Gulf of Mexico. Water

wars are well under way in that part of the world with the infamous Bundy gang already talking of laying siege to water reservoirs – a startling reality. Lake Mead is at its lowest level since it began filling in 1936 and it generates the hydro that powers all of these large desert metropolitan areas.

Politically in Alberta things have deteriorated. Premier Jason Kenny remains deeply unpopular. His cuts to our post secondary institutions have not gone over well with Albertans nor has his government's continued attacks on our doctors. Many rural towns are losing their doctors and are not able to find replacements. Emergency departments in many rural hospitals are routinely closed due

to staffing shortages. With the 1.3 billion of tax payer dollars he buried in the ground over the Excel pipeline fiasco I think he has dug himself a hole he will not be able to crawl out of. To his credit I think he has handled the COVID-19 vaccine rollout rather well. Disturbing to me are the Albertans who refuse to get vaccinated. I am thinking we will not get beyond 75%.

A couple of recent energy announcements will see a carbon neutral hydrogen plant, which is already under construction, built east of Fort Saskatchewan as well as a plastics plant built south of Redwater by Wolfe Resources, who are owned by our very own CPP. They bought out Access pipelines a couple of years ago and changed the name to Wolfe Resources. Currently that investment is earning 12% year over year. There is some work being done on the BA refinery project which was mothballed when it ran out of funding a couple of years ago. Also, Shell is expanding a carbon sequestration pilot project they started several years ago. And apparently there is a goldmine full of lithium in many of our abandoned oil wells.

We have decided to hold off on picking a regional convention date in the hopes of having an in-person gathering later in the summer.

In Solidarity,
Doug Scott

SUPPORT US

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Support the work of our organization by making a donation - nfu.ca/join/donate

Feel free to contact us at nfu@nfu.ca if you would like more information!

Mourning the 215 Children Found in Unmarked Graves at Residential School Site, We Commit to Decolonization



The National Farmers Union expresses our grief in solidarity with the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc community and all Indigenous nations and survivors of residential schools. The events unfolding in the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc territory, where the bodies of 215 children were found in unmarked graves, deeply horrify and anger us. As an organization with membership of predominantly settler farmers and allies, we recognize that we have a responsibility to challenge on-going settler colonialism and the genocide of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

In particular, we strongly support the calls for an Indigenous-led, government funded inquiry into the undocumented deaths and burials on sites of residential schools, in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 71-76. We also support calls for the federal government to fund care centres and other forms of support for residential school survivors and their families.

We recognize that this is an especially important time for us to listen and centre the voices of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples. This is a time for us to deepen our understanding of Indigenous dispossession, and reflect on the paradigms of land ownership and commodification that undermine Indigenous food sovereignty, governance, and kinship systems. The actions we take on a daily basis can make a difference, and we need to hold governments, those around us, and ourselves to account for perpetuating systemic racism and injustice.

We are writing this open letter not only to mourn with, but also to uplift voices calling for reconciliation and decolonization. **As a start, we call on all our members to immediately take any of the following actions:**

- [Learn about the impacts of the Indian residential school system](#), and read the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report](#) and the [Calls to Actions](#) {Note: After 5 years, implementation has not even begun on 60 of the 94 Calls to Action}
- Contact your MP and local officials to implement TRC's Articles 71-76
- Learn about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit People and read the [MMIWG National Inquiry report](#)
- If you are able to, financially support Indigenous-led organizations
- Consider donating to the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society <https://fncaringsociety.com/donate> and the Indian Residential School Survivors Society <https://www.irsss.ca/donate>
- Join monthly discussions of the NFU's Indigenous Solidarity Working Group where we aim to meaningfully engage with issues of settler-colonialism including settler responsibility and relationship building, solidarity, reparations and the re-matriation of Indigenous land.
- Actively listen to people of First Nations, Inuit and Métis backgrounds
- Stand up to stereotypes, prejudice and systemic racism
- Have conversations with your family and friends (even children)
- Be respectful towards trauma survivors and elders
- Be patient, empathetic and receptive
- Raise awareness in your community and online (wear orange, <https://www.orangeshirtday.org/>)

For those in need of support:

IRSSS Toll-Free Line: 1-800-721-0066

24-Hour National Crisis Line: 1-866-925-4419

KUU-US Crisis Line: 1-800-588-8717

Tsow-Tun-Le Lum: 1-866-925-4419

In solidarity,

The National Farmers Union

Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action on Missing Children and Burial Information:

71. We call upon all chief coroners and provincial vital statistics agencies that have not provided to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada their records on the deaths of Aboriginal children in the care of residential school authorities to make these documents available to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation.

72. We call upon the federal government to allocate sufficient resources to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation to allow it to develop and maintain the National Residential School Student Death Register established by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

73. We call upon the federal government to work with churches, Aboriginal communities, and former residential school students to establish and maintain an online registry of residential school cemeteries, including, where possible, plot maps showing the location of deceased residential school children

74. We call upon the federal government to work with the churches and Aboriginal community leaders to inform the families of children who died at residential schools of the child’s burial location, and to respond to families’ wishes for appropriate commemoration ceremonies and markers, and reburial in home communities where requested.

75. We call upon the federal government to work with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments,

churches, Aboriginal communities, former residential school students, and current landowners to develop and implement strategies and procedures for the ongoing identification, documentation, maintenance, commemoration, and protection of residential school cemeteries or other sites at which residential school children were buried. This is to include the provision of appropriate memorial ceremonies and commemorative markers to honour the deceased children.

76. We call upon the parties engaged in the work of documenting, maintaining, commemorating, and protecting residential school cemeteries to adopt strategies in accordance with the following principles:

- i. The Aboriginal community most affected shall lead the development of such strategies.
- ii. Information shall be sought from residential school Survivors and other Knowledge Keepers in the development of such strategies.
- iii. Aboriginal protocols shall be respected before any potentially invasive technical inspection and investigation of a cemetery site

■ Links

- nctr.ca/
- www.trc.ca/about-us/trc-findings.html
- [trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls to Action English2.pdf](http://trc.ca/assets/pdf/Calls_to_Action_English2.pdf)
- www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/
- fncaringsociety.com/donate
- www.irsss.ca/donate
- www.orangeshirtday.org

All Convention talks are available on the NFU YouTube Channel. English & French whenever possible.

Watch and learn today!

 **National Farmers Union Canada**
www.youtube.com/NationalFarmersUnionCanada

National Farmers Union's Women Farmers Address Childcare

On April 19th, the federal government announced an allocation of \$30 Billion for the design and implementation of a universal child care program - the Early Learning and Child Care and Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care programs.



Within two days, representatives of the NFU from coast to coast, in both official languages, were meeting with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Minister Bibeau to advocate for the needs of farm and rural families in the development of this program. We subsequently met with senior policy staff to Minister Monsef, Minister for Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development, at the end of May.

The most important features of childcare for rural farm families are flexibility and universal access. Farms are more frequently run by women than ever before; they need to be able to keep farming during child-raising years.

Options to support rural farm families might include:

- On-farm au pair/temporary foreign workers who might bring their own children
- Paid caregivers from within the family
- Farm families forming co-operative for paid child-minding
- Home-based flexible childcare (e.g. Tagesmutter in Germany)
- Rural/village-based daycare

We see many positive opportunities for skills upgrading and rural jobs coming out of this initiative; upgrading, training, Early Childhood Education (ECE) for rural people who want the jobs created, combining eldercare with on-farm childcare, increased child socialization with group dynamics, accreditation options for skill-building: CPR, first aid, ECE, safe food handling, etc., and above all making farming and rural life more appealing to the next generation of farmers.

Over the course of the next year, we plan to take our advocacy efforts to the provincial and territorial level since childcare is an area of provincial jurisdiction and successful implementation of a program like this will require cooperation across all levels of government.

Les fermières de l'Union National des Fermiers abordent la question de la garde d'enfants

Le 19 avril, le gouvernement fédéral a annoncé une allocation de 30 milliards de dollars pour la conception et la mise en œuvre d'un programme universel de garde d'enfants - le programme d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants et le programme d'apprentissage et de garde des jeunes enfants autochtones.

En l'espace de deux jours, des représentants de l'UNF d'un océan à l'autre ont rencontré le ministre Bibeau d'AAFC pour faire valoir les besoins des familles agricoles et rurales dans le cadre de l'élaboration de ce programme, dans les deux langues officielles, et nous avons par la suite rencontré le personnel politique principal du ministre Monsef à la fin du mois de mai.

Les caractéristiques les plus importantes des services de garde d'enfants pour les familles agricoles rurales sont la flexibilité et l'accès universel. Les exploitations agricoles sont plus souvent dirigées par des femmes qu'auparavant ; elles doivent pouvoir continuer à travailler pendant les années d'éducation des enfants.

Les options pour soutenir les familles d'agriculteurs ruraux pourraient inclure:

- des au pair à la ferme ou des travailleurs étrangers temporaires qui peuvent amener leurs propres enfants
- des aides familiales rémunérées au sein de la famille
- des familles agricoles formant une coopérative pour la garde d'enfants rémunérée
- garde d'enfants flexible à domicile (par exemple, Tagesmutter en Allemagne)
- Gardes d'enfants en milieu rural ou villageois

Nous voyons beaucoup d'opportunités positives pour l'amélioration des compétences et les emplois ruraux découlant de cette initiative; amélioration, formation, EPE pour les personnes rurales qui veulent les emplois créés, combinaison de soins aux personnes âgées et de soins aux enfants à la ferme, socialisation accrue des enfants avec la dynamique de groupe, options d'accréditation pour le développement des compétences: RCP, premiers secours, EPE, manipulation sûre des aliments, etc. et, surtout, rendre l'agriculture et la vie rurale plus attrayantes pour la prochaine génération d'agriculteurs.

Au cours de l'année prochaine, nous prévoyons d'étendre nos efforts de promotion aux niveaux provincial et territorial, car la garde d'enfants est un domaine de compétence provinciale et la mise en œuvre réussie d'un tel programme nécessitera la coopération de tous les niveaux de gouvernement.

Introducing the NFU Mental Health Working Group



The National Farmers' Union is pleased to announce the formation of its newest committee, the Mental Health Working Group. This Working Group is open to all to support Canadian farmers, farm workers, and rural residents.

The NFU Mental Health Working Group was formed in response to a recent resolution calling on the NFU to develop ways to support farmers' mental health and social connection. NFU members and others established the Working Group to investigate existing farmer mental health services and explore how these might be improved, moving beyond crisis lines to more individualized, farmer-specific supports and interventions, while centering NFU values and its systemic approach. The Working Group's mission is to

promote the creation of an equitable food system in which farmers' mental health is prioritized, and one where farmers have access to the mental health services they need.

The Working Group's current projects include constructing a comprehensive list of mental health resources available to farmers across Canada (now available at nfu.ca/help), connecting regional members with people developing regional mental health programs, and exploring the possibility of expanding counselling services for NFU members. The Mental Health Working Group also celebrated the recent delivery of the NFU *Collective Care* series of mental health workshops. Thank you to the NFU and Youth Caucus

for their support of that valuable series.

"The unique lens of the NFU brings a systemic analysis to mental health," says NFU ED Mara Shaw. "While many people individualize the burden of mental health, the NFU appreciates the systems that degrade mental health and is working to address both farmer health and systems change."

The Mental Health Working Group is open to NFU members and friends of the NFU who are not current members. It currently includes a diverse and engaged group of volunteer members from across the country representing multiple sectors, such as the mental health community, farmers, researchers, and NFU board members.

If you are interested in the work being done or would like to take part in the working group, please get in touch at: shaw@nfu.ca

NFU BULLETIN

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What are GHG offsets? New NFU brief critiques proposed federal offset credit and trading system



In March, the federal government published draft Regulations for its Greenhouse Gas Offset Trading System. As part of the consultation process, on May 4th, the NFU submitted a brief to Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). That NFU brief can be found [here: https://www.nfu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Fedl-Regulations-for-Offset-Protocols-NFU-submission-May-2021-Final.pdf](https://www.nfu.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Fedl-Regulations-for-Offset-Protocols-NFU-submission-May-2021-Final.pdf)

Here is a short explanation of the proposed offset system.

- The existing **Output-Based Pricing System (OBPS)** regulates large industrial emitters such as oil refineries, nitrogen fertilizer plants, steel mills, tar sands production facilities, auto plants, etc.
- These large emitters do not pay the carbon levy [often incorrectly called a carbon “tax”] on fuels. Instead, the OBPS sets **intensity-based caps** on emissions (tonnes of emissions per unit of output).
- Large emitters that exceed these (often relatively loose) caps must either pay an **excess emissions charge** or remit **compliance units** of one of three types: 1. surplus credits earned in previous periods when their emissions were below the caps; 2. federal offset credits; or 3. credits from approved provincial offset protocols and projects. Numbers 2 and 3 do not yet exist (see next).
- The draft Regulations published in March would set the stage to create different types of federal

offset **protocols** (for forestry, landfill gas, soil carbon sequestration, etc.) and pave the way for specific offset **projects** that would generate **credits**. Projects could **aggregate** many smaller projects into one, e.g., thousands of farms into one aggregated project.

- Those credits could be traded and eventually sold to large emitters who could **retire** them to offset ongoing or excess emissions. In effect, a reduction in GHG emissions (or an increase in removals) in one place would be treated as offsetting increased, excess, or continued emissions in another.
- Examples of offset projects that could generate credits include increased or accelerated (i.e., above a business-as-usual trendline) tree planting, fertilizer-related nitrous oxide emission reduction, or soil carbon sequestration. As they say, however, the devil is in the details.

Important to know is that the Offset Credit System will not be the delivery mechanism for long-awaited carbon credit for adoption of no-till seeding practices and resulting soil sequestration. Protocols and projects can only generate credits for sequestration that is “additional,” i.e., above that which would have occurred had there been no protocols or credit payments. With no-till adoption already at about 60% across Canada and 70% across much of the Prairies, for the vast majority of Canadian acres there will be no credit payments for no-till. Though this seems harsh or wrong, when one understands that *an offset credit is essentially a cheap licence to enable a large emitter to continue to burn fossil fuels and emit CO₂*, we come to understand that creating offsets out of existing or probable no-till adoption is not in the interests of anyone who wants a stable climate. A key idea in the NFU’s report is that “it is right to incentivize and support farmers to improve soil health and levels of soil organic matter and carbon. It is wholly wrong to see these on-farm activities as somehow offsetting fossil fuel emissions.”

Here is a summary of the NFU's 20-page brief to ECCC:

- A. The draft Regulations require 100+ years of monitoring and reporting for soil-based carbon offset protocols, raising the prospect of farmer lock-in, contractual entanglements, and land title encumbrances.
- B. The requirement to maintain elevated soil carbon levels for a century may create long-term, *unlimited* liability for farmers. For example, farmers may sell carbon credits for \$10 per tonne in the 2020s, but under some scenarios they may be forced to replace those credits decades later possibly at 10 or 20 times the original price. Encumbrances on land titles, restrictions on land-use changes, contractual obligations, and long-term unlimited liabilities may reduce farmland values by amounts much larger than the payments farmers originally received for offset credits. In the long term, farmers could be net losers.
- C. Soil carbon sequestration is temporary compared to the centuries-long effects of fossil fuel combustion and resulting CO₂ emissions. The NFU brief states: "When we burn fossil fuels, we release carbon that was stably sequestered deep underground for hundreds-of-millions of years. In contrast, when we re-sequester that carbon into soils, we put it into a place, just inches below the surface, where it will be held much less securely and probably for just decades, not for millions of years or even hundreds. Releasing carbon from oil and then putting it into soil in no way resolves the problem created by the initial release."
- D. Soil carbon sequestration capacity is limited. The NFU brief explains: "Agricultural soils have the capacity to absorb quantities of GHGs roughly equal to the tonnage of previously released soil carbon, but there is no capacity to sequester fossil-fuel carbon. Farmland is not a sponge that can sop up industrial emissions. The capacity of farmers to capture carbon and improve soils is real and undebatable. But the idea that soil carbon gains can offset fossil carbon releases is false and dangerous. Other ways need to be found to support and incentivize farmers, and other ways, such as strict regulations, need to be put

in place to rapidly reduce GHG outflows from large industrial emitters."

- E. Rebuilding healthy soils is critically important and the best way to support farmers' efforts is via well-crafted, comprehensive, publicly funded government programs. *At best*, offset credit payments could provide a patchwork of support for some farmers—incentivizing a few practices in some places but leaving most farmers, acres, and practices unsupported. Therefore, offset programs cannot provide the primary means to advance rapid soil health restoration or gains in soil organic carbon levels.

The NFU report closes with a list of publicly funded programs that can help farmers transition to best-possible grazing and cropping systems and that can help protect and enhance soils and reduce on-farm emissions.



LEAVE A LEGACY!

A legacy donation to the NFU or National Farmers Foundation empowers the next generation.

Contact Mara Shaw at shaw@nfu.ca to discuss estate donations.

United Nations Food Systems Summit: Corporate Feast – Public Famine

by Nettie Wiebe

When the Secretary General of the United Nations announced two years ago that a Food Systems Summit (FSS) would be held in late 2021, the news was welcome but puzzling. Rising hunger, ecological harm from food production including deforestation, soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, decimated fisheries, polluted waters, along with growing rural poverty, displacement and climate change all pointed to the need for change. Even before the COVID-19 crisis it was clear that food systems were in urgent need of transformation.

The puzzle was, why was this food summit initiated by the Secretary General when previous summits were hosted by the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the multilateral body responsible for the right to food? A strategic partnership agreement between the UN and the World Economic Forum, the “platform for the world’s 1000 leading companies”, provided some clues. As if to leave no further doubt about the corporate interests driving this summit, the Special Envoy appointed for the Summit, Agnes Kalibata, is the president of AGRA (Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa), a Gates/Rockefeller funded agency pushing high input/high tech agriculture and GMO seeds.

Multilateral summits, based on human rights, with clear decision-making processes and accountability mechanisms, are meant to prioritize the voices of “rights holders,” and hold governments responsible for upholding those rights. But this FSS is not grounded in human rights. Rather it is based on the idea of “multi-stakeholderism”, treating all stakeholders as equal, without consideration of power imbalances or their position in the system. This

fiction of equality leaves the powerful both unchallenged and unaccountable, hiding or ignoring any conflicts of interest. By conflating private corporate interests with the public interest it overrides and erases the latter.

The FSS advertises itself as a “multi-stakeholder” event that is very “inclusive”. It has proliferated a dizzying array of platforms, dialogues, consultations, committees, documents and forums for participation. Private citizens and governments, including the Canadian government, are being drawn into these processes. Some of these are open but many are for invited participants, bypassing and undermining autonomous, democratic organizations in favour of handpicked individuals. The entire process lacks transparency and legitimacy. Who is making decisions? On what grounds? Who is accountable? To whom?

To counter this corporate capture of the UN and food governance, the Via Campesina has joined hundreds of other civil society organizations, universities and social movements in denouncing the lack of human rights grounding, transparency and accountability of the FSS. [\[https://viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/12/LVC-Position_EN_UN-Food-Summit_2020_LowRes3.pdf\]](https://viacampesina.org/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/12/LVC-Position_EN_UN-Food-Summit_2020_LowRes3.pdf).

In response, the FSS organizers have ramped up the use of progressive language, (“sustainability”, “nature positive solutions”, “planetary boundaries” “women’s empowerment” etc.) and references to human rights in their documents. But the primary orientation of the FSS

remains firmly rooted in the corporate interests that initiated it rather than the demands and rights of people producing food and those most impacted by food systems. It continues to confirm a narrow range of scientific data while ignoring the traditional and experiential knowledge of small-scale farmers, indigenous, peasant, and rural peoples. As a multi-stakeholder platform it is geared to finding profitable “solutions” to cherry-picked problems without uncovering root causes or challenging unjust power structures.

The FSS lacks human rights grounding and threatens democracy by undermining multi-lateralism and democratic governance. It is a vehicle for further corporate control over, and consolidation of, food systems. It blocks urgently needed, genuine transformation of food systems.

Please join the actions to defend human and peoples’ rights, food sovereignty, and food systems as commons and public goods, putting public interests first and dismantling corporate power over our food and farming.

<http://www.csm4cfs.org/call-action-mobilization-challenge-un-food-systems-summit-re-claim-peoples-sovereignty-food-systems/>

Nettie Wiebe served in elected leadership positions of the National Farmers Union for a decade (1987 – 1999) and currently represents La Via Campesina at the UN Committee on World Food Security in Rome. She farms near Delisle, Saskatchewan, growing organic grains and pulse crops as well as raising cattle.

The Future of Seeds in the United Nations Food System Summit

By Erling Brakefield



Photo Credit: Markus Spiske

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed serious problems with world-wide food systems where societies in the poor sectors of the world were already facing hunger and the lack of resources to maintain sustainable agricultural practices.

The Food System Summit, initiated by the United Nations, stated aim is to deliver progress on all 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The problem arises where the direction of the Summit will undoubtedly displace farmers' rights to resources such as land, seed, and technologies. At present, farmers' rights to save, improve, and share seed is being entangled in a maze of policies which will invariably be a benefit to the private sector, which is striving for the complete control of the world food chain, mainly through digital applications now being forced onto farmers. The attack on publicly funded plant breeding is also in their crosshairs.

The Global Coalition of Open Source Seeds Initiatives (GOSSI) and the farmer-scientist network MASIPAG (see masipag.org) will be working together to unpack the UN Food Systems Summit by bringing to light the complete picture of the behind-the-scenes control of agriculture in the world today. This "unpacking" is being done through education of the role of seeds, public plant breeding benefits, and the farmers who manage the same throughout the world.

Big tech companies such as Microsoft, Apple, Google and Facebook are using drones, artificial intelligence (AI), sensory devices and satellite imagery to create a new form of digitally controlled agriculture. The information derived is then passed on to giant agribusiness companies in the private sector, such as Syngenta/Chem China, Bayer/Monsanto, BASF, Corteva and FMC Corporation, who in turn "advise farmers" on which inputs, seeds, and pesticides to use in their operations.

Society, including farmers, has a tendency to trust the ready information at our fingertips instead of stopping and taking a further "hands on" approach. Case in point - recently a young farmer complained to his local agricultural outlet of bare spots appearing in his flax crop. The advice? An application of fungicide at \$3.00/acre would be necessary. However, his father decided to investigate and found the problem to be an infestation of cutworms!

Bayer's App is used on 24 million hectares in North and South America and Syngenta's digital tool manages 40 million hectares worldwide. While the digital world is beneficial, it must be in the hands of farmers and public plant breeders and not in the hands of Big Tech whose only object is financial gain by completely controlling world seeds. If we rely on corporate seed, we will lose food sovereignty in the world! Collectively, we need to stand together and change the narrative because if we do not, then choices we have today could be gone tomorrow!

Who control the seeds, Controls the Food, Who Controls the Food, Controls the World

View the MASIPAG webinar ***The Future of Seeds in the UN World Food Systems Summit***, at facebook.com/MASIPAGFarmers/videos/241458367660101

Farming has always been Erling's first passion. Now retired from the work force, he literally worked around the world to be able to purchase his first parcel in 1984. His farm is a family operated certified organic operation, growing cereals, Flax and Red Clover.

Agricultural Migrant Worker FAQ: Part Two

By the NFU Migrant Workers Solidarity Working Group

Q. How does racism affect migrant farm workers in Canada?

A. Migrant farm workers are targets for racists and white supremacists in this country.

This [Spring](#), horrific racist images and “White Lives Matter” slogans were posted across the Kitchener-Waterloo Region, including at the farm gates of an NFU member, where migrant workers grow food for Canadians. It is not uncommon for racial slurs to be yelled from car windows at migrant workers labouring in the fields. Some migrant workers have even [reported](#) being run off the road by racially-motivated drivers while bicycling to and from town. At the beginning of the pandemic, the media reported that migrant workers were being [denied entry](#) into grocery stores. In spite of the essential work they perform and their contribution to the local economy, some [public officials](#) have used racial stereotypes in their discourse and shown overt anti-migrant sentiments.

The recent Islamophobic terrorist attack in London, Ontario sent shock waves across the world. A young white man who was a part-time worker at an egg-packing plant, crashed his truck into a Muslim family, killing Yumna Afzaal, 15, Madiha Salman, 44, Salman Afzaal, 46, and Talat Afzaal, 74, and injuring Faye Afzaal, 9. This terrorist attack exists on the extreme end of a spectrum of overt racist acts committed on a daily basis against Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour in Canada, including migrant workers.

The rise of racially-motivated hate crimes and racist outbursts are not isolated to urban areas, but are also woven into the fabric of rural, farming communities across the country. As Black farmer Abdul-Rahim Abdulai recently [shared](#), the “diversity problem” in the Canadian agricultural sector has meant that “for all my positive experiences, racism still found its way into my days.”

The structural racism embedded in the substandard rights and conditions afforded to migrant workers through Canadian Temporary Foreign Worker programs only serve to embolden white supremacists. From closed work permits to denial of citizenship status, from poor bunkhouse conditions to inconsistent pandemic protections, migrant farm workers are more vulnerable to

racist attacks and less able to push back because of their lack of power and precarity of status. What kind of example do we set when our own Canadian government regulations for migrant workers are discriminatory?

Q. Bringing it home: Why should it matter to me?

Racism robs us all of our humanity. As progressive farmers we need to care not just about the land but all of the people who live and work on it. A small number of NFU members hire migrant farm workers. Most of us buy some food that is grown and harvested by the hands of migrant farm workers. We need to help grow and nurture anti-racist movements.

The NFU Migrant Workers Solidarity Working Group believes that it is important for white farmers to join mass movements of people acting in solidarity with Black-, Indigenous-, and People of Colour-led justice movements. We agree with [Showing up For Racial Justice Toronto](#) that “white people have a key responsibility to undermine white support for white supremacy and institutions that uphold white supremacy,” and that “white people must do the work of transforming white communities.” The diversity of Canada is not fully reflected in the NFU membership. As an organization largely composed of white farmers, we can start by supporting the actions of the [Migrant Rights Network](#) and [Justicia for Migrant Workers](#).

This is the second in a series of FAQs on migrant workers put together by the NFU Migrant Workers Solidarity Working Group. Look for more Migrant Farm Worker FAQs in upcoming UFQs!



Who really benefits from rising farmland prices?

By Katherine Aske

As I drove around Alberta interviewing grain and oilseed farmers for my MA research in 2019-2020, I was often told that the price of farmland has been rising simply because “they’re not making it anymore.” While not untrue, this obscures deeply political forces at play.

Land prices have risen dramatically across the prairies over the last 30 years, concurrent to near-stagnant commodity prices, dismal net incomes for a majority of farmers, the tripling of farm debt, a third of farmers exiting the sector, and questions about who the next generation of farmers will be. For many, this is a crisis situation stemming in part from a strange severing between the market value of farmland and its productive value.

For over a decade, investors have been land grabbing. Farmers are now well aware of this trend, and many are intimately affected by it. Institutional investors like the Ontario Teachers Pension Plan, real estate asset management firms like Bonnefield, and individual investors like Robert Andjelic -- who owns almost as much land in Saskatchewan as Bill Gates owns in the US (as the country’s largest private landowner) -- are becoming increasingly well-known across the prairies.

Although the number of acres owned by investors remains small by some metrics, recent research indicates that their deep pockets allow them to sustain or inflate market values that are untenable for most everyone else. Deregulated financial lending institutions, loaning to farmers on assessments of equity as opposed to cash flows, also appear to play a role in pushing up prices.

Farmland prices in Alberta are, on average, double what they are in Saskatchewan. The shocking reality at present is that many farmers purchasing land in Alberta for conventional grain and oilseed production *cannot pay it off in their lifetimes just by farming it*. These farmers become like speculators, their fates hitched on hopes of an ever-rising tide. High land prices also spur even more farmland concentration since often it is only big farmers who can increase their landholdings, and high prices keep aspiring farmers out of the sector.

Many farmers also must turn to renting land, which increases the precariousness of their operations, adds financial pressure via annual rental payments, detaches them from the benefits of long-term investments in soil health, and fundamentally limits their ability to attempt alternatives to the conventional model.



The influence of investors’ land purchases and banks’ lending policies in shaping land markets is part and parcel of the *financialization* of farmland. The language of financialization is not yet in common parlance, but it has been occurring across diverse sectors of the Canadian economy since the 1970s as financial actors, institutions, motives, and markets have become increasingly powerful.

In the financialized economy, profits are obtained without the creation of a good or offering of a service, and instead through speculation followed by capital gains, rent, dividends or interest. These avenues allow those with existing wealth the potential to become wealthier by syphoning value from others, furthering inequality.

Changes in farmland ownership are often cast off as “inevitable” -- a conceptualization that forgets (willfully or otherwise) our collective capacity to shape the future. In fact, distinct ideological policy choices have been made to tip the scales of the Canadian agricultural sector in favour of transnational agribusiness. Financial actors, far from the benign capital sources they paint themselves as, are on the scene to exploit the crises left in the wake of farmers being stripped of their marketing power and protections.

There are other paths forward from the one we are travelling. As many farmers’ fates have become dependent on rising farmland prices, regulating farmland markets becomes a challenge, although it can be done. And in finding ways to decommodify the land, it is possible to stop the cycle of each generation needing to refinance the land, to the benefit of financial actors only.

Acknowledgement: Funding for this research was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council of Canada.

Katherine Aske recently conducted her MA thesis research on changing farmland tenure in Alberta. Though she calls the Maritimes home, she is farming in Tsawwassen, BC this summer.

Remembering Ted Shelegy



*Ted Shelegy passed away on Thursday, May 13 at 80 years of age. Ted was a member of the Scotland Optimist club, a Provincial Green Party candidate, long serving high school science teacher, and lifelong organic farmer on the family farm in Scotland, Ontario. These memories of Ted were written by **Brian Griffith and Gwenn French**, fellow members of NFU Local 351 – Brant/Hamilton/Halton.*

We both graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College in 1964. I believe that was the last year that those degrees were granted from the University of Toronto. We both taught science in secondary school for many years, although I did retire much earlier than Ted because I sort of “evolved” into farming by purchasing some farms from retiring neighbours around the original “home” farm owned by my parents. I became good friends with Ted through the National Farmers Union (NFU) about 15 or so years ago.

Our philosophies about agriculture and farming seemed to mesh. We believed that to have a successful and sustainable farming enterprise it was necessary to work hard, work smart and perhaps the most important factor, unlike the thinking of many other people, was to work together. We believed

that proper planning on any industry level about such things as acceptable practices of husbandry, environmental and marketing were essential. Knowing where your markets are, especially local ones, to whom you are selling and why and for how much is critical to establishing sustainable production parameters which will lead to prices which will cover the cost of good farmers and lead to an acceptable level of stability. We both knew this would require a degree of discipline and commitment among producers, governments, academics and others that would be difficult to achieve and maintain in a world where much of the commerce revolves around extreme frugality (and quite a few foolish strategies) which usually leave farmers on a slippery slope to the bottom.

Ted was certainly dedicated in his own farming endeavors to producing food crops that were healthy and beneficial to consumers and his passing occurred out in his field doing just that which he loved. He worked hard and lived a relatively simple but rewarding life. He derived much pleasure from activities like cutting firewood, visiting with his many friends to talk about just about any topic and keeping current on local, national and world affairs especially less reported events. He was curious about many things, quite often less popular ones. He served his community well and, most importantly, he stayed dedicated to his principles.



He was a great guy, and a good friend to both Gwenn and I and we will surely miss him. Rest in peace Ted. You have fought the good fight.

Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

Working with the family of Paul Beingessner, the NFU 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.**
- **Deadline for entries is November 1, 2021.**

This year's THEME: *How can young farmers help shape the post-covid agriculture system towards food sovereignty?*

Send entries to the National Farmers Union:

By email: nfu@nfu.ca or

By mail: National Farmers Union, 2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6

The winners will be announced at the NFU Convention in November 2021. All or some entries may be published by the NFU. 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.

Do you want to get more involved?

The NFU has several policy action committees where members discuss relevant policy matters, and in the process, develop expertise they can contribute to the NFU as a whole. Committees may provide recommendations to the NFU Board and develop resolutions for discussion at annual conventions. They can set up working groups or subcommittees to support research on specific aspects of the Committee's work. Committee members may have opportunities to be media contacts or spokespeople in government processes to advance the NFU's work in the area. The Committees can also organize actions to promote NFU positions to other organizations, governments and the general public. Participating in a committee is a great way to get to know other NFU members who share your interests, to deepen your own knowledge and to bring forward your personal experience and perspectives to inform our policy work.

We currently have committees working on:

- Seed
- Livestock
- Grain marketing and transportation
- Climate Change
- Trade
- Supply Management
- Farmland ownership
- Mental Health
- Indigenous Solidarity
- Migrant Worker Solidarity
- International Programs
- La Via Campesina
- BIPOC-led issues
- Regional issues

To get involved, email Cathy at holtlander@nfu.ca and let her know which committee you are interested in, and she will add you to their contact list.

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National: 2717 Wentz Avenue, Saskatoon, SK S7K 4B6 Ph: (306) 652-9465 Email: nfu@nfu.ca

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YES



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- Farming Unit \$225.00 / year
- Farm Family \$225.00 / year
- Associate \$ 75.00 / year
- Youth (14-25) \$113.00 / year

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to the National Farmers Union

- \$25 \$50 \$100
- \$500 Other _____

For automatic monthly membership or donation payments, visit us at www.nfu.ca .

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