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“The National Farmers Union, Local 316 is excited to announce the beginning of another farmer-initiated project aimed at building a more sustainable local food system in Kingston and its countryside,” said Andrea Cumpson, NFU Local 316 president.

“Our project is a farmer education, training, and support program aimed at strengthening the region’s farm community and local food system,” said David Hahn, local NFU director. “By engaging new and established farmers in the opportunities and benefits that come from producing food for local markets, the project aims to increase the viability of family farms and build the supply of local farm products for local eaters.”

All farmers, new or established, and anyone considering a future in farming and gardening are encouraged to come to the *NFU New Farm Project’s* fall banquet taking place on Saturday November 29. “This will be an opportunity to introduce the project to current and future farmers and explain how you can take part,” said project coordinator, Ian Stutt. “Whether you’ve farmed for 3 years or 30 years, or want to intern on a local farm, there’s a spot for you within this project.”

All project information will be available on our website [www.nfu.newfarmproject.ca](http://www.nfu.newfarmproject.ca), including the location, event program, and registration details for the November 29<sup>th</sup> fall banquet. This website will be online as of October 21, 2008.

The centrepiece of the initiative is the establishment of a new chapter of the Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training here in Kingston and its countryside. CRAFT Ontario currently is made up of more than a dozen Ontario farms, each offering full-season internships that provide training for many farmers of tomorrow. This *NFU New Farm Project* will help to set-up the first eight “host farms” or “mentors” for 2009, gradually reaching a total of fourteen farms. By fall 2012, at least forty-four interns will have passed through the program and many will be exploring a future in farming.

The project will also offer training and support to new and established farmers through workshops, focus groups and on-farm learning. These activities will build the capacity of farmers to plan and manage their farms to benefit from the growing demand for local food from local markets. Livestock, seed, and equipment will also be available to those who participate in the project as interns, mentors, new farmers, or established farmers seeking new local opportunities.

While emphasizing production for *local* markets, the project will also focus on ecologically-sound farming methods and will support participating farmers in making farm management decisions that will lead to long-term sustainability.

In all, the *NFU New Farm Project* will build farm capacity as well as farm and local food community in Kingston and neighbouring counties. At a time of record lows in net farm income in Canada and record profits in corporate agribusiness, there is need for new approaches that make family farms viable and farmers feel a sense of hope and pride in their work. “As more farmers and eaters turn toward the vision of a sustainable local food system for answers, the National Farmers Union is proactive in taking giant steps towards building it,” said Cumpson.

*The NFU New Farm Project* is a four-year project with major funding from Heifer International, a non-profit organization whose goal is to help end world hunger and poverty through self-reliance & sustainability, while ensuring that we care for the earth. The project began in September 2008 with the naming of project coordinator, Ian Stutt, and will run through to June 2012.

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In partnership with

**FOOD DOWN THE ROAD**

*Toward a Sustainable Local Food System for Kingston and Countryside*

