



TWO VIEWS ON RENEWABLE ENERGY

Dear NFU Members, please read both of these timely articles on renewable energy, with a thought to bringing forward policy suggestions to your next Regional meeting. There are excellent points in each article that will get you thinking and will help us to improve the NFU's policy on green/renewable energy. Those of you in Ontario can expect to see this issue discussed at the March 20th spring Convention in Stratford. Thanks very much to NFU members Ann Slater and David Hahn for writing these two informative and provocative articles.

—Dave Lewington, NFU 1st Vice-President (Policy)

Ontario gets it right on renewables

This article was contributed by David Hahn, a hard-working and long-time NFU member who farms an hour north of Kingston.

With the passage of the *Green Energy and Green Economy Act (GEGEA)* last May, Ontario has become a North American leader in promoting clean green renewable energy. This broad-ranging *Act* attempts to promote energy conservation, develop renewable energy generation, and transform Ontario's economy with its new focus on green energy. The initiative will help Ontario close its dirty coal-fired generating plants and meet Ontario's ambitious CO₂ emission reduction targets. It also promises that its Ontario-content rules will create 50,000 new jobs in supporting industries. Furthermore, many of Ontario's citizens, especially farmers, will be able to take advantage of profitable ownership opportunities. The *Act* is modelled on similar legislation in Germany and Spain that has led to huge increases in the installation of renewable energy capacity in both those countries. For farmers and rural communities, perhaps the most interesting opportunity associated with this *Act* comes through the strong promotion of Community Power. *(continued on page 12...)*

Corporate wind and renewable energy companies poised to capture benefits of *Green Energy Act*

This article was contributed by Ann Slater, an active and dedicated NFU member who farms near St. Mary's, Ontario.

Over the past several decades, we farmers have adopted new technologies and practices, often with the encouragement of the government of the day, and with the belief that these new technologies and practices will benefit us through higher production and, thus, more farm income. As the NFU has shown time and time again through our research on corporate control of agriculture, the benefits of these new technologies and practices generally do not end up with farmers or our rural communities, but instead in the pockets of fewer and fewer corporations.

With the passage of the *Green Energy and Green Economy Act* in September, 2009, our provincial government is opening the doors (and our pocket books) to foreign corporations and making it easier for companies to come to our rural communities and our farms to profit from

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NFU weighs in strongly against Triffid-sparked certified seed requirement

NFU President Terry Boehm has worked for years to help farmers and other Canadians understand that seed companies (aided by acquiescent governments) are working to choke off farmers' abilities to save and re-use seed. Seed companies want to force farmers to replace self-supplied seed with purchased commercial seed.

Recently, farmers' ability to save and re-use seed has come under attack as part of the fall-out from a genetically-modified (GM) variety, Triffid, contaminating the Canadian flax supply. That contamination has closed markets and wilted prices.

Boehm and the NFU have taken a lead role in helping Canadians understand how this damaging contamination occurred, and in helping push back against corporate efforts to use the contamination as a way to compel farmers to buy new seed each year. NFU officials have talked to policymakers and media, issued press releases, and worked with allies to expose and counter the seed company push. In a January 18 news release entitled "Grain Companies Exploit Flax Situation to Tighten Vise on Farmer Seed Saving," the NFU explained the issue. That release said, in part:

Viterra and grain and seed companies are pushing the requirement for certified seed as a purported solution to the problem of the Triffid contamination in flax shipments to Europe. Triffid is a genetically-modified variety not approved in Europe. But the NFU believes that the proposed certified seed cure is the wrong one, and that there will be long-lasting and negative side effects.

The best solution is to test the seed supply, both farm-saved seed and certified seed. It is false to simply assume that certified seed is safer than farm-saved. For one thing, it is almost certain that the certified seed system is the source of the Triffid contamination farmers are now facing. Furthermore, it has now been determined that two varieties of flax are contaminated with Triffid at the breeder seed level (varieties Normandy and Mons).

NFU President Terry Boehm also said in the release that Viterra and other powerful grain companies must not be allowed to dictate seed policies. "Under the Canada Grains Act, Viterra

cannot refuse grain deliveries if they have space. Thus, Viterra cannot unilaterally declare that all production must be from certified seed," said Boehm.

He concluded: "Farm-saved seed can be just as safe as certified. All seed needs to be tested, and test results need to be provided at delivery. The Canadian Grain Commission must be the final arbiter in this issue. Grain companies are over-reaching, trying to dictatorially impose their will. The same grain companies that market seeds are trying to make those seeds mandatory. Only the CGC has the power and authority to block this power grab.

We need to take all steps necessary to restore markets for flax, but we have to ensure we take only *necessary* steps. And we have to ensure that key tools for farmers, such as seed saving, are not trampled as we move forward." -nfu-

YOU are a member of La Via Campesina

As a member of the NFU, you and your entire family are also members of La Vía Campesina, a global movement of tens-of-millions of farming families from 69 countries based in the Americas, Asia, Europe, and Africa.

La Vía Campesina is made up of 149 organizations of small- and medium-sized farmers, peasants, landless peoples, agricultural workers, rural women and youth and indigenous peoples. It has been called one of the most important and surprising social mobilizations to emerge globally in the past several decades.

La Vía Campesina and its constituent organizations such as the NFU initiated the concept of Food Sovereignty (see box below) as a challenge and an alternative to the corporate-led, export-focused, trade-agreement-driven globalization and commodification of food. Since La Vía Campesina

first proposed the bold, innovative, and politically powerful food sovereignty initiative in 1996, both farm and urban-based movements around the world have embraced it as a foundation for viable food system alternatives. Food sovereignty is fast becoming a strong global movement.

The NFU is a founder of La Via Campesina. Longstanding linkages and exchanges between NFU women and women in Nicaragua's farm organization UNAG (including the Farmers' Brigades to Nicaragua) led to an invitation to NFU President Wayne Easter to address UNAG's annual conference in Managua in 1992. There, in response to agriculture negotiations in the GATT (now the WTO), progressive farm leaders took the first steps to create La Vía Campesina. In 1993, Annette Desmarais represented the NFU at the First International Conference of La Vía

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What is Food Sovereignty?

Food Sovereignty asserts the right of citizens, communities, and countries to define their agricultural and food policies and to supply themselves with food. **Food Sovereignty includes:**

- prioritizing local agricultural production in order to feed people, access of peasants and landless people to land, water, seeds, and credit. This entails genuine land reforms, banishing GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms), protecting access to seeds, and safeguarding water as a public good to be sustainably distributed.
- the right of farmers and peasants to produce food and the right of consumers to decide what they consume, and how and by whom it is produced.
- the right of countries to protect themselves from food dumping and food imports priced below a reasonable cost of production.
- ensuring agricultural prices are linked to production costs.
- encouraging all citizens and communities to take part in shaping food and agriculture policies and systems.
- the recognition of full and equal rights for women farmers who play a major role in producing food and ensuring household food security.

The worst agriculture program in Canadian history?

The following editorial by NFU President Terry Boehm ran in the "Ontario Farmer." We thank that paper for highlighting the NFU's views.

The ongoing Hog Farm Transition Program invites hog farmers to bid to get payments to empty their barns and cease production for a minimum of three years. But the program seems designed to prey upon farmers' desperation—forcing them to bid to undercut each other in order to get a portion of the exit-plan money.

The Program asks farmers to submit bids that represent the price, per animal unit, farmers would require in order to stop producing. Bid too much, and you get nothing. Ask for what you need per animal to retire your debt, and your bid might be too high, and you might get zero; you might end up trapped, unable to pay your bills and exit, unable to pay your bills and continue. One can imagine spouses, stressed and fearful, staring across the table at each other, lowering and lowering their bids. The program seems designed to precisely quantify each family's desperation, to place them in an excruciating financial dilemma, and to force them into a humiliating bidding war against fellow producers.

Such irony. Until the mid-1990s, most hog farmers enjoyed the benefits of single-desk selling. All hogs were sold through a single agency that used its collective-marketing power to gain a better price and to ensure that all farmers had equal access to the market. Single-desk agencies ensured that farmers weren't forced to climb over their neighbours to make sales. The idea behind single-desk selling was that it is wrong to make farmers compete against farmers because, when they do, the result is lower prices; packers simply buy from whoever is willing to sell cheapest, whoever is most desperate. Keep that last idea in mind.

Farmers in many provinces lost their single-desk agencies in the mid-to-late-'90s. Not long after, farmers lost any semblance of stable markets or adequate returns. The hog price crisis of the past several years is one of the most spectacular implosions of an agricultural sector in Canadian history.

To the rescue comes the Canadian Pork Council and the Government of Canada with their whoever-bids-lowest-gets-the-money exit plan. This is exactly the kind of climb-over-one's-neighbour farmer-pitted-against-farmer competition that single-desk selling sought to eliminate. The same warped version of free-market ideology that destroyed the single-desks and, thus, forced farmers to compete against each other to sell ever cheaper to ever fewer packers is, now that the sector has been ravaged to its foundations, forcing those same farmers to compete in the same destructive ways, even to get out. After the single-desk agencies were destroyed, it was neighbour against neighbour to sell; now, it's neighbour against neighbour to *sell out*. The Hog Barn Transition Program is a debasing and wretched approach; one that farmers should profoundly hope is never replicated in any other government scheme.

Imagine how Ag. Canada officials or staff would feel if their termination benefits or pensions were parcelled out using a method similar to the Hog Farm Transition Program. Imagine the Minister of Agriculture saying to Ag. Canada staff: we're going to have to let 500 of you go, but we only have termination packages for 100—whoever bids the lowest gets a package, but many of you will get nothing. Or imagine the same approach with government pensions, a scheme wherein those willing to retire on the least got the small payments they bid for, and those who said they needed more got nothing. Any Canadian would call such a process unfair and inhumane.

Hog farmers and farmers in other sectors need to join together to say a resounding 'No!' to this bid-to-the-bottom methodology, and to ensure that such a black process never again rises from the swamp of bad program design in Ottawa.

—nfu—

World Food Summit Parallel Forum: PEOPLE'S FOOD SOVEREIGNTY NOW!

In November 2009, the Director General of the United Nations (UN) Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) called together nations for a World Food Summit in Rome in the wake of a severe food crisis that saw food prices spike during global economic instability. The number of hungry people in the world climbed to over 1 billion, and world leaders were invited to focus on finding ways to solve this urgent problem. Sadly, the official summit offered few solutions and fewer commitments.

But a parallel Civil Society Forum, gathering 642 participants from 93 countries and representing 450 organizations, engaged in vigorous, focused debate from November 13 to 17, 2009. Four NFU members, Martha Robbins, Annette Desmarais, Kalissa Regier (sponsored by Heifer International) and Nettie Wiebe, were part of a strong *Vía Campesina* delegation. As the initiators of both the language and movement of food sovereignty, the *La Vía Campesina* continued to give important political leadership on food issues.

The declaration from the Civil Society parallel forum (available at www.viacampesina.org) calls for radical and wide-ranging solutions to the growing hunger problem. The following are a few excerpts:

Food sovereignty

“Food sovereignty is the real solution to the tragedy of hunger in our world.

Food sovereignty entails transforming the current food system to ensure that those who produce food have equitable access to, and control over, land water, seeds, fisheries, and agricultural biodiversity. All People have a right and responsibility to participate in deciding how food is produced and distributed. Governments must respect, protect, and fulfill the right to food as the right to adequate, available, accessible, culturally acceptable, and nutritious food.”

Climate change/ecology

“We reaffirm that our ecological food provision actually feeds the large majority of people all over the world ... [O]ur practices focus on food for people, not profit for corporations. It is healthy, diverse, localized, and cools the planet.”

“We commit to strengthen and promote our ecological model of food provision in the framework of food sovereignty that feeds all populations including those in marginal zones like small islands and coastal areas. Our practices, because they prioritize feeding people locally, minimize waste and losses of food and do not create the damage caused by industrial production systems. Peasant [and small-scale] agriculture is resilient and can adapt to and mitigate climate change.”

GMOs/supply management

“We call for a global moratorium on GMOs. Governments must protect and properly regulate domestic food markets. Our practices require supply management policies in order to secure availability of food and to guarantee decent wages and fair prices.”

Land grabbing

“Land grabbing by transnational capital must stop. Landlessness and land grabbing have intensified in the wake of the global food crisis, deforestation, sequestering of water bodies, and privatization of the sea, inland waters, and coastal zones. ... Countries and companies are colluding in alarming land-grabbing practices.”

“We demand comprehensive agrarian reforms which uphold the individual and collective/community rights of access to and control over territories....Reforms should guarantee women and youth full equality of opportunities and rights to land and natural wealth, and redress historical and ongoing discrimination.”

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(World Food Summit Parallel Forum, from page 5)

Seeds

“We reject intellectual property rights over living resources including seeds, plants, and animals. De facto biological monopolies—where the seed or breed is rendered sterile—must be banned. We will keep the seeds in our hands.”

Solidarity

“We commit ourselves to increase our level of organization; build broad and strong alliances; and promote joint actions, articulations, exchanges, and solidarity to speak with a strong voice for defending our food sovereignty.”

“We engage ourselves to collectively accept our responsibilities to mobilize from the local to the international levels in our struggles for food sovereignty.”

—nfu—

—Thanks for NFU former President Nettie Wiebe for this report.

PEI/WINFA Dialogue on Fair Trade

The National Farmers Union and Cooper Institute in Prince Edward Island are working in partnership on a project which will result in a preliminary plan for a domestic fair trade system for farm products in Canada. Besides research into the experiences of domestic fair trade in North America, the PEI groups have benefited from personal contact with the Windward Islands Farmers Association (WINFA). Reg Phelan, member of NFU and Cooper Institute, keeps alive a long-standing relationship with the Windward Islands, which have developed a solid fair trade system for the marketing of bananas. WINFA is the negotiator of pricing and other marketing arrangements on behalf of producers of the Islands.

It is obvious that the banana trade is not a domestic system given that the Windward Island farmers opted to work from their traditional European market. However, Phelan points out that the Caribbean experience teaches us a lot which can be applied to a domestic fair trade model. “They share with us the essential principles and necessary skills which they practice in order to create and sustain fair trade as a successful path for fair marketing.” This involves: finding alternative marketing links; establishing alternative networks of solidarity between producers and consumers; emphasizing that producers must increase control over their future, with a fair and just return for their work and continuity of income; and providing decent working and living conditions for farm labourers. Fair Trade, whether domestic or international, requires that production adheres to a set of strict social, democratic, and ecological standards.

In early December, Renwick Rose, Executive Director of WINFA, made a presentation to the twenty-two participants involved in six domestic fair trade consultations organized by NFU and Cooper Institute in PEI. Rose helped the group to understand some of the processes, difficulties, and successes of setting prices based on cost of production. He was most passionate about the social responsibilities of producers in a fair trade system. His dialogue with the participants and the successes in the Windward Islands provided added motivation to work together to develop a fair trade system for food.

WINFA’s involvement in the PEI project is partially funded by the National Farmers Foundation. —nfu—

Consideration of Food Sovereignty missing in UK report —a Critique on Food 2030: A British National Food Strategy

NFU Women's President Joan Brady contributed this critique of a recent UK report on the future direction of that country's food system.

Britain, a net importer of food has written a national policy which looks at many aspects of the food system. The extensive study and recommendations came as a response to food price spikes experienced in 2007 and 2008 and the resulting export restrictions that signaled a lack of confidence in global food stocks. Britain has recognized the inability of its resource base to supply the food needs of its population and has focused a great deal of the discussion on impacting world markets and ensuring accessibility to global food stocks. Included in the report is a significant aid budget that will target underdeveloped countries and provide them with the more advanced technology to increase production.

The British public is encouraged to become aware of food issues and intentional about healthy and sustainable consumption. They are advised to support local producers and even consider growing food themselves. They are asked to consider their food choices and their effect on society, the environment and the economy. The Food Miles debate is presented as an opportunity to learn more about the complex issue of food production and choices. The global scope of the policy encourages the consumer to consider the impacts of their choices on the potential supply chain outside of Britain's borders. Citizens are cautioned that focusing solely on local food may jeopardize the other national economies that will provide food in the future. The authors promise to make food affordable for all members of society.

Although well intentioned, timely and an initial effort in a complicated process, the report does raise some issues of concern. Food 2030 focuses on Food Security which is the desire/obligation to ensure that all members of society have access to healthy, nutritious and culturally appropriate food. Affordability of food is cited as the key to food

security and global trade, competition and reduction in trade barriers the answer to affordability. But without consideration of Food Sovereignty - true food security is unattainable. Food Sovereignty seeks to put those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than privileging the demands of markets and corporations.

Of particular concern is the portion of the report that deals with the resiliency of the food system. The study names the assets of British farmers, namely land and buildings as the measure that will protect the domestic food system from market vagaries. Simply put, Britain's food producers will carry the risk for the entire population's food supply. They will be required to compete on world markets, markets that will be aided to the tune of 80 billion British pounds.

The trends show that British farm debt is increasing. Similar to conditions in Canada, two generations of inattention will affect the ability of domestic production to offset rising threats of global food insecurity. Currently, Canadian farmers carry \$60 billion in farm debt, a result of 20 years of net farm income from the markets hovering at, or below, zero; leaving little capacity for risk and innovation. Canadian agriculture is experiencing a succession crisis. In the ten years between the 1996 and 2006 Censuses, corporate and government policies and disruptive global markets forced 11% of Canadian farm families off the land—a steep downward trend. In a similar time frame Canada has lost 62% of its farmers under the age of 35 (1991 to 2006 Ag. Censuses). Considering that Food 2030 cites attracting new entrants into the farming sector in Britain as one of the upcoming challenges, one can only speculate that the same is true for farm families in Britain.

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(Consideration of Food Sovereignty missing in UK Report, from page 7)

A familiar refrain, one that echoes throughout both Canadian agricultural policy and Food 2030, is the need to improve the skills and knowledge of primary producers. The recurring message is that any challenges or shortfalls in the industry are a result of a lack of knowledge or expertise on the part of farmers. Once again, the introduction and acceptance of new technologies are presented as the solutions to a sustainable food system. Intimate knowledge of farm production and land base/resource has developed over the centuries but little consideration is given to that inherent knowledge, instead domestic/local infrastructure is dismantled and production practices are standardized across the globe with very little consideration for unique growing conditions and traditional practices. If food production is to be sustained then farm families and local citizens need to be recognized as the experts and their collective knowledge retained.

Food 2030 attempts to define the solution to food security as the global population welcomes another 2 billion residents to the planet. The development of a British National Food Policy reinforces the need for the same in Canada. It is obvious that when a nation such as Britain extends its thoughts to affecting and virtually owning a portion of the food system beyond its borders then we as Canadians must develop a response to that interest. A development of a Canadian food policy based on grassroots input from all stakeholders is necessary now. If we don't rebuild and regain control of our national food system, it will be fair game in a future where food supplies are at risk.

—Joan Brady is NFU Women's President.
She farms with her family in Dashwood, Ontario.

(You are a member of La Via Campesina, from page 3)

Campesina, in Mons, Belgium, where the international movement was formally constituted. Former NFU President Nettie Wiebe has played a lead role in developing and shaping La Via Campesina. She served as North American Coordinator and Coordinator of the Women's Commission. Since then, the leadership of the NFU have continued to play a vitally important role in building and strengthening La Via Campesina. Our organization, dedicated members, and leaders are appreciated around the world for their strong, courageous leadership in defending family farmers here and elsewhere!

La Via Campesina matters to your farm. Over 40 years ago, provincial farmers unions and concerned farm families came together to form Canada's National Farmers Union. They understood that farm policies were increasingly made at the national level. A national movement was needed. Today, globalization and international trade agreements such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), NAFTA and others, mean that, increasingly, the decisions that affect your farm are made internationally.

The NFU works locally provincially, and nationally. Thanks to our work within La Via Campesina, the NFU now also has a strong voice *internationally*. -nfu-

—The NFU thanks Nettie Wiebe and Annette Desmarais for their assistance in writing this article.
Nettie is a former President of the NFU. Annette worked with the NFU for several years, providing support for our organization's international work.

Reclaiming Power in Copenhagen: Demos, Sit-ins, Walk-outs, and More

This article was written by Terran Giacomini. Terran has been working with the NFU for about two years, including several months at the National Office in Saskatoon. She is a student at University of Guelph studying rural sociology and social movements. In December she travelled to Copenhagen. Terran can be contacted at terrangiaco@gmail.com.

Thousands of concerned citizens from hundreds of countries gathered in Copenhagen, Denmark to demonstrate opposition to the latest United Nations COP15 climate change deals in mid-December 2009. This meeting constitutes the first time in history that civil society organizations have gotten together in a permanent forum to organize and coordinate actions to bring about climate justice for the future of the planet.

The Klimaforum09—A People's Forum

Despite the coverage from many news sources that tended to focus on the alleged violence of 'protestors', my experience was that the demonstrations were full of art and humour, were family friendly and included people from a diverse range of ages, races, religions and linguistic backgrounds. The unfriendliness and violence came mostly from the police who were given special rights by the Danish government that they have been using to undermine local activists, arrest people at random and hold people for long periods of time without charges. Still, we marched with dignity; peacefully and with banners that said 'make love not CO₂', 'save the planet, scrap capitalism', and 'peasant agriculture cools the Earth'.

Most demonstrators also attended educational films, seminars and participated in discussions at the People's Forum. Leaders in the movement for climate justice from all over the world were assembled at the Forum called the Klimaforum09 to give talks and facilitate dialogue on a range of topics including carbon markets, food and energy sovereignty, oil-free living, genetic modification, how to build community radio, gender and climate change, and much more. Vandana Shiva, George

Monbiot, Larry Lohmann, Naomi Klein and Maude Barlow were some of the many speakers. The people's process stood in stark contrast to the undemocratic nature of the official talks at the Bella Centre where the worst climate criminals, the big oil and energy corporations and their allies, were whispering in the ears of the delegates, pushing for lower targets, carbon markets while honest, legitimate concerns of non-governmental organizations and countries from the South were ignored.

The folks at the Klimaforum09 used a variety of creative, non-violent tactics to build a movement that African feminist and historian Wahau Kara calls a 'victory for ecofeminism'—for civil society movements who have gathered to reclaim the centre of decision making and demand that we bring about system change to stop climate change. Indeed, the slogan for the people's forum—known as the Klimaforum09—'system change not climate change'.

Out of the people's forum came a People's Declaration which has been signed by over 400 organizations, (available at klimaforum09.org/Declaration). The Declaration includes a call for a complete abandoning of fossil fuels within the next 30 years with a specific milestone for every five-year period, compensation of climate debt for the overconsumption of atmospheric space and adverse effects of climate change on all affected groups and people, the rejection of market-oriented and technology-centered false-solutions such as nuclear energy, agro-fuels, carbon capture and storage, Clean Development Mechanisms, biochar, genetically 'climate-readied' crops, geo-engineering and reducing emissions from deforestation and

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forest degradation, (REDD) which deepen social and environmental conflicts and prevent real solutions to climate crisis based on renewable, and sustainable use of natural resources, as well as transition to food, energy, land and water sovereignty.

Demonstrations: Outside and Inside Alliances

Inside the official talks, civil society organizations used sit-ins and walk-outs to protest the silencing of their voices in the climate negotiations. A large number of NGO groups had their passes removed because the space was too small to fit all of the organizations who were given passes. A group of youth delegates from around the world positioned themselves in a meeting area and demanded to be included, stating ‘this is our future; you cannot have climate talks without the voices of youth’. Into the second half of the official talks, African delegates and civil society groups walked out of the talks because they were disgusted at the lack of progress and the lack of democracy and transparency in the process.

Outside of the official talks, civil society groups held demonstrations; virtually two or three every day, to bring public and media attention to their demands and calls to action. The December 16th demonstration was by far the most significant in terms of coordinated action between countries and groups inside the formal talks and those outside. The purpose of the action was to break down the division between the social movements on the inside and outside, and create a horizontal democratic process we called the ‘People’s Assembly’ during the demonstration in order to discuss real solutions to climate change and build solidarity. The action was organized by Climate Justice Action in solidarity with organizations from around the world including the La Vía Campesina, Jubilee South, Focus on the Global South, and the Indigenous Environmental Network.

The tear gas and police repression was brutal on both sides of the fence. I was with the La Via Campesina bloc which strategically avoided the police and worked hard to ensure that the People’s Assembly would continue. We gathered around a large, round tarp and the Assembly began with leaders from various organizations declaring new ways forward that will change the system not the climate. Alberto Gomez addressed the hundreds of people in the crowd with a farmer’s perspective. “Farmers want the power to decide their future” he stated. “Sustainable agriculture is an alternative, food sovereignty is our [farmers] alternative — our proposal to humanity. Food sovereignty is the alternative to capitalism and its multiple crises... We want farmers’ agriculture to be the basis of food sovereignty because the farmers can cool the planet and we can also feed the people”. (I filmed the entire People’s Assembly and it can be found on YouTube.)

On the whole, as Wahu Kaara reminds us, the victory was in the unified voice and the convergence of many civil society groups at Klimaforum09, in order to build solidarity against climate criminals. The various actions taken by civil society groups bring attention to the real solutions that are already taking place on the ground; the solutions that constitute a reconstruction of the world and of the capitalist system. Civil society groups have shown that we will not accept the little solutions like tree planting and debt cancellation and carbon trading; the deals that the big leaders are trying to give us. We will not wait for our governments. We want system change to stop climate change and Copenhagen has shown us that we must, as a matter of life, reclaim power over resources and create horizontal, participatory democracy and distributive, life-centered economies.

—nfu—

Livestock pamphlets available

The NFU has produced 2 pamphlets aimed at advancing our work on the livestock issue.

The first is aimed at non-farmers and explains that farmers are receiving historically-low prices and that packers and retailers are taking a record-high amount from the grocery-store beef dollar. The second pamphlet focuses on captive supply and is aimed at farmers. Both pamphlets can be customized for various NFU Regions or for various purposes.

To see a sample or to request copies, email nfu@nfu.ca.

Do you trust the big grain companies and railways to regulate themselves?

Plan to attend a one-day symposium on the

Canadian Grain Commission

Sunday, March 14, 2010—8:30 AM to 5:00 PM

Heritage Inn, Saskatoon, SK

The Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) plays an important regulatory role in ensuring:

- Farmers' interests are protected in their dealings with grain companies and railways;
- Canadian grain exports are inspected to ensure they are of consistent high quality;
- Farmers have access to producer cars – a right guaranteed under the Canada Grain Act;
- Grain companies maintain accurate weights and measures in their elevators;
- The Canadian grain handling system does not become contaminated with unregistered varieties.

The Canada Grain Act was passed by the Parliament of Canada in 1912, in response to demands by western farmers for regulation of the grain gathering and transportation system. Shortly afterwards, the Board of Grain Commissioners (later to become the CGC) was established to carry out the provisions of the Act. For nearly a century, the CGC has regulated the grain trade in Canada and safeguarded the interests of farmers. It has cooperated with the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) to ensure that Canadian grain exports are of consistent high quality, and that western Canadian farmers receive the maximum returns possible on the sale of their grain to export markets.

But farmers can no longer take the CGC, or its watchdog regulatory role, for granted.

For the past several years, the Harper government has introduced amendments to the *Canada Grain Act* which would fundamentally alter the mandate of the Canadian Grain Commission. Under these amendments, which so far have failed to pass in Parliament, the mandate of the CGC would no longer be to regulate the grain trade in the interests of grain producers. Instead, the CGC would become a service provider for the grain trade – providing weighing, grading and inspection services for a fee.

No farm organization has been as an effective and ardent supporter of the CGC as has the National Farmers Union. To ensure a robust CGC working in the interests of farmers we need to continue to strengthen the NFU with new membership. Please consider seeking out and bringing a non NFU member along with you to this very important meeting. Exposing farmers first hand to the crucial work of the NFU is the best recruitment tool we have.

Learn about:

- The CGC and the farm movement: an historical perspective;
- The regulatory, inspection, advocacy roles of the CGC;
- Producer cars: How the CGC works with the CWB to put more money in farmers pockets; and
- Legislative and regulatory threats to the CGC and the *Canada Grain Act*.

The symposium is open to all farmers and the general public.

There is no admission charge, but donations are appreciated to help cover costs.

Remember - Bring your neighbours!



*For more information and to register for the event,
please contact the NFU office at 306-652-9465.*

(Ontario gets it right on renewables, from page 1)

Community Power is parallel to what we in the NFU call Food Sovereignty. Food Sovereignty is the development of a food system that places the interests of the participants in the local or regional food system first. The farmers, eaters, processors, and distributors shape the food system that they operate in. Farmers get adequate and stable returns from the marketplace. Eaters get good, clean, fairly produced food. Eaters know where their food comes from. It's no longer produced through an anonymous corporate system over which they have no influence. More of a community's food will be produced and processed locally, or at least regionally.

Community Power means that electricity will be largely generated nearer the communities that use it. Many more people in the community will be able to participate in the energy system as producers of electricity. Electricity will have a character that it does not have now. We will know that it may come from local, farmer-owned biogas facilities, or a municipally owned landfill gas system, or a wind farm that is owned by a local cooperative, or solar panels that many folks have on their roof-tops. Just as Food Sovereignty will produce food security, Community Power will produce more energy security. Both will revitalize farming and rural communities.

The Feed-In Tariff (FIT) program is the principal policy tool that facilitates Community Power opportunities. This type of program is also known as an Advanced Renewable Tariff. (NFU policy has long advocated this approach.) The predecessor program in Ontario was called a Standard Offer Contract (SOC) program. Essentially the government, through the Ontario Power Authority (OPA), offers farmers, homeowners, businesses, and community organizations such as co-ops, municipalities or churches long-term contracts at guaranteed prices (tariffs) for the purchase of renewably generated electricity. The length of contracts is 20 years, except for waterpower which is for 40 years. Prices vary according to the source of electricity and the size of the development. Prices are designed to cover the cost of production. Does that sound familiar to farmers? If only we could get it for food now!

Domestic-content requirements should promote the development of renewable energy component manufacturing in Ontario and make Ontario a continental leader in renewable energy technologies at the same time that it ensures that an increasingly larger portion of our energy dollars stay in the provincial economy. The domestic (Ontario) purchasing requirements for solar MicroFIT start at 40% and will increase to 60% in 2011.

To promote widespread decentralized small initiatives, developments of 10 kilowatt (kW) or less are classed as MicroFIT projects and receive better prices and are subject to less onerous rules and approval processes. The sources of energy include landfill gas, waterpower, and biomass but those most likely to interest farmers are photovoltaic, wind, and biogas. MicroFIT photovoltaic (pv) projects can be either roof-mounted or ground-mounted and receive 80.2 cents/kWh. Pv projects over 10 kW that are mounted on roof-tops receive somewhat less, and those that are ground-mounted receive 44.3 cents. Large ground-mounted systems cannot be developed on Class 1 or 2 agricultural lands and only under certain conditions on Class 3. (The NFU had lobbied to keep these developments off prime agricultural lands.) All onshore wind developments receive 13.5 cents. On-farm biogas projects up to 100 kW receive 19.5 cents and between 100 and 250 kW, 18.5 cents.

Farmers will have several ways to benefit from this new program. We may individually raise the capital needed and develop our own projects. This is likely more feasible with solar or biogas than wind as wind benefits from a larger scale of development. Biogas facilities require significant capital outlays but at least five farmers in Ontario have developed biogas generators previously under the old SOC program. They have now been grandfathered in to the new higher rates of the FIT program. These are typically between 100 and 250 kW systems that capture gas from manure and burn it to produce electricity. These operations may be able to benefit from what the OPA calls a "dispatchability bonus"—the farmer may receive a kWh bonus price or "adder" for holding the gas back and using it when the grid requires it. Pv developments can vary widely in scale but a typical 10 kW system may come in at between \$65,000 and \$80,000 and may produce annual electricity sales worth about \$9,000 in most of Ontario.

Farmers can also benefit from renewable energy opportunities under the FIT program by joining together with other farmers in co-ops to develop larger projects. Farmers for Economic Opportunity (FEO) in Norfolk County are one such co-op already in operation in Ontario. This approach has been employed widely in Denmark and Germany to develop medium- to large-sized wind developments.

Although the FIT program does favour community-based projects, it also allows large renewable energy

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(Ontario gets it right on renewables, from page 12)

corporations to develop projects under the FIT rules and at the prices announced. Wind developers will still be approaching farmers to sign long-term leases for accepting wind turbines on their properties, as has been the case for several years in Ontario. Some farmers will still consult their lawyers and then sign on the dotted line to ensure a steady stream of revenue into their farms. Others, however, will look at the profits the wind companies stand to make from the turbines on their land and decide to investigate keeping more of the profits in their communities through a real community-based approach to wind development such as co-operative or other community-ownership models.

The Ontario Sustainable Energy Association (OSEA) and the Community Power Fund can offer assistance in establishing a community-based renewable energy project. The Ontario government provided assistance to OSEA to establish the Community Power Fund. The Community Power Fund is a \$3 million fund that will support project development activities of Ontario-based community organizations pursuing local renewable energy projects. The Fund will disburse \$2.5 million in grants and spend \$500,000 on operations, capacity building, and management.

The *Green Energy and Green Economy Act* is a remarkable achievement. Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and Energy Minister George Smitherman deserve credit for this innovative new approach to electricity development. They responded with vision and imagination to a major lobbying drive spearheaded by the Ontario Sustainable Energy Association (OSEA). OSEA is a province-wide, member-based, non-profit organization representing more than 1500 individuals including private citizens, co-operatives, farmers, First Nations, businesses, institutions, and municipalities. OSEA members are engaged in or supporting Community Power projects and renewable energy. OSEA's mission is to serve the Community Power sector including households, farms, First Nations, co-operatives and collaborative businesses, local distribution companies, municipalities, other institutions, and non-Community Power partners through: advocacy, public outreach, and capacity building.

Ontario had taken steps to have more renewable energy developed but OSEA members felt that a broader more comprehensive policy and program framework would be necessary. OSEA officially kicked

off the campaign for a Green Energy Act for Ontario at the World Wind Energy Conference in Kingston in June 2008. By the time of the OSEA Community Power Conference in Toronto in Nov 2009, the Green Energy and Green Economy Act legislation had been passed and most implementing regulations were in effect. By mid December, the OPA had received approval requests for projects totalling 8,000 Megawatts (MW) of renewable energy. All this capacity may not be built out immediately because of inadequate transmission capability, but this response shows a huge amount of interest in building renewable energy projects under the FIT program. The Ontario government has announced major investments in expanding grid transmission capacity to accommodate expected new renewable developments.

Energy and food are the underpinnings of life. The GEGEA offers the potential to transform the energy basis of the Ontario economy and increase prosperity in rural areas if farmers and rural landowners respond to opportunities it offers. That this has happened at all is quite remarkable; that it has happened in such a short period of time is truly amazing. In the future, this initiative may well be seen to be of equal importance to the creation of Ontario Hydro by Adam Beck at the beginning of the 20th century. The founding of Ontario Hydro led to increased rural prosperity through increasing the ability of farmers to use electricity to transform work and life on the farms. At this time of economic crisis on our farms and in our rural communities, Community Power offers to increase prosperity by helping farms and rural areas generate significant new income by generating large amounts of electricity for both rural and urban communities. Could it be that Community Power and Food Sovereignty offer twin pillars of revitalized rural life?

For further information about the Green Energy Act, Community Power and the FIT program see:

The OSEA website:

<http://www.ontario-sea.org>

Community Power:

<http://www.cpfund.ca/about-the-fund.html>

The OPA website:

<http://microfit.powerauthority.on.ca>

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(Corporate wind and renewable energy..., from page 1)

another of our resources: the wind. As farm incomes continue to drop, it is easy to understand why some of us are willing to consider deals with wind developers interested in putting up turbines on our farms: so that we can increase our incomes. But the clear risk is that we will not get a fair share of the money made off our land if we sign twenty-year-long leases with outside companies. Instead, we will gain only a few dollars—a fraction of what we should fairly receive.

Like many government policies, the *Green Energy Act* is complicated and brings together a number of related initiatives. I believe some of these initiatives have the potential to benefit farmers and rural communities, if farmers and communities are given the resources they need to succeed. Both energy conservation and an increased role for renewables in supplying the energy needs of the province make sense upon first consideration. But, it is in the discussion of *how* renewable energy is supplied where questions arise. We all agree that producing food is a good idea, but within the NFU I believe that questions arise when we enter into a discussion of *how* that food is produced and who benefits. Similar questions are essential when analyzing our energy future.

With sufficient support, and access to the power grid, I can see benefits to farmers from microFITs (“FIT” stands for Feed-In-Tariff) and community-owned co-operative projects. However, when it comes to larger developments, especially industrial wind developments, I have concerns. There may be similar concerns with large-scale, industrial solar developments, but I am less familiar with such projects. The *Green Energy Act* has at least put in place a requirement that solar farms not be erected on Class 1 and 2 farm land or speciality crop areas.

The *Green Energy Act* takes away all planning and zoning rights from municipalities for renewable energy projects. This means that citizens of a community have no choice, should the provincial government decide a large, industrial wind farm should be erected in their community. The *Green Energy Act* does require that members of the community and municipalities be consulted. Neighbouring landowners must receive a written notice of the proposed project, notices must be placed in a local newspaper, and at least two community meetings must be held to discuss the project and its potential impact. However, consultation that is one-sided and provides no mechanisms to require any changes is meaningless. Although the first consultation is required to be held early in the process, it is held after landowners have signed lease agreements with wind developers, so that the wind developer can tell those concerned that the project is something their neighbours want and support.

The NFU’s “Corporate Profits” report details some of the mechanisms by which agribusiness continues to extract ever-increasing revenues and profits at the expense of farmers. Many of these mechanisms mirror the techniques wind developers are using as they move into rural communities to sign up farmers and begin to put in place their strategy of taking wealth off our farms. Lease agreements with farmers are likely to vary. Some of my comments may not be true for all lease agreements. Nevertheless, the following observations broadly characterize the tactics of large wind and renewable energy companies:

Cost Externalization forces costs onto farmers, communities, municipalities and the environment. These are the costs of a wind project to the community that are not paid for by the wind company. Some examples of cost externalization in relation to wind include road maintenance and repair (especially during construction), health and stress issues among community members, loss of property values, and disruptions to tile-drainage systems.

An article by Bob Aaron in the *Toronto Star* in January 2010 points to another potential cost to municipalities. Aaron recently found out that the Assessment Review Board (ARB) has cut a homeowner’s assessment in half because the house is located near a noisy hydro substation. The substation serves the nearby Melancthon I wind development. Aaron feels this is “the first of many similar cases that are certain to follow” leading to a “significant reduction in the tax base of municipalities like Amaranth, which play host to wind turbine farms.”

Another cost to consider down the road is who ends up with the responsibility to dismantle wind turbines. Those with experiences with mining and pipelines warn that those costs will not be borne by the developer, no matter what they say now.

Price Obscurity: Price information for farm commodities has largely disappeared into confidential contracts and corporate self-dealing. As price information disappears from the public eye, farmers lose their ability to bargain. The contracts/leases that farmers sign with large wind developers are confidential. There is no way for farmers to know if the offer they are being given is the same as their next-door neighbour received, or if they are being offered a fair price. In addition, leases may require landowners to give up: future carbon credits for their full farm, the right to erect their own microFIT generation facilities, and the right to erect any buildings taller than twenty-five feet for the length of the contract.

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(*Corporate wind and renewable energy...*, from page 14)

Sharpening profit extraction tools: In agriculture, corporations use tools such as patents, contracts, and Plant Breeder's Rights legislation to ensure farmers pay more and more for seeds. Wind developers typically require 21-year leases (contracts) with landowners which then give the company (not the landowner) the option to renew for another 21 years. Such tools are clearly designed to maximize company profits and minimize landowner revenues and options.

Merging with Corporate 'Competition': At this point, there are a number of companies erecting wind farms in Ontario. However, we are already seeing operational wind farms sold to competing wind developers. As the NFU has pointed out in its research, if you reduce competition you can increase profit. How long before the wind farms across Ontario are owned by a handful of companies?

As part of the *Green Energy Act*, the Ontario Government recently signed a \$7 billion secretive deal with the Samsung Consortium to develop green energy in Ontario. Along with the dollars committed to Samsung there are concerns around what else Samsung may have been given in the deal. There is only about 2,500 MW of transmission capacity available in Ontario, and reportedly 550 MW of this capacity has been set aside for Samsung. Of additional concern, is that transmission capacity is especially scarce in southwestern Ontario where Samsung is being given priority.

A stated goal of the *Green Energy Act* and the FIT program was to provide equal access to the grid. We are aware of the transmission capacity set aside for Samsung but there are still questions as to what capacity has also been promised to other industrial wind developers and what capacity is and will be available to community projects and farmer-controlled microFITs.

In conclusion, the government's *Green Energy Act* could provide benefits if run well, and in the interests of farmers and communities, but will fail if powerful corporations are allowed to twist the legislation to make themselves the primary beneficiaries. And with so much money at stake, that latter scenario is very likely.

Just as many NFU members have questioned the many government policies that promote the industrial production of food, I believe we need to keep a close eye on the *Green Energy Act* in Ontario. It is already being used to promote the industrial production of renewable energy despite the potential impacts on farmers and rural communities. We need to change the direction of both the production of food and of renewable energy so that the control and benefits stay on our farms and in our communities.

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 - or by mail to: National Farmers Union
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Please request a reply verifying receipt.

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.

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