

THE  
**union farmer**  
QUARTERLY

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**Photo:** (left to right) Robin Tunnicliffe, owner of Saanich Organic Farm and NFU member from Vancouver Island; Colleen Ross, NFU Vice President of Policy; Dan Jason of Salt Spring Seed Company; John Wilcox of Duck Creek Farm on Salts Spring Island; and Celeste Mallett Jason, partner at Salt Spring Seed Company. (see page 2)

## On the front cover...



### Organizing in British Columbia

**N**FU membership in BC is growing. The issues farmers experience in other provinces are also the realities of farmers throughout BC. In March 2012 I completed an eight-venue speaking tour in BC, sharing the work and vision of the NFU, and encouraging farmers and eaters to join the NFU in our common struggle. There is a deep understanding among the people I met that our food and farming systems are being increasingly undermined by government-sanctioned corporate control.

Urban encroachment on family farms is a big problem in the parts of BC where city folk wanting to live in rural settings are launching formal complaints against their farming neighbors. For example, Dan Ferguson, a fine young farmer, was taken to court because his donkey and guinea fowl were “too loud”. Dan won his right to farm case, but was saddled with a \$40,000 legal bill to win that fight. There is something seriously wrong with that picture.

In BC, the Agriculture Land Reserve (ALR) is not doing what it was meant to do, and controversy around the good and bad of the ALR continues to plague farmers. One example brought to my attention was the situation of two young brothers trying desperately to farm within the ALR who were told that they could not sell the piles of rocks on their land. Yet there are literally tonnes of rocks piled up on their farm, taking up precious space. Under the ALR rules, no material can be removed from a farm in the ALR, not even rocks. There are also the farmers who want the ALR status removed from their land so that they can sell it for real estate development. It is hard to judge these farmers when they have lost their livelihoods as farmers as a result of trade policies that promote cheap imports of fruits and vegetables.

I am going to try to help Dan and others like him. Let’s continue to grow our membership. Now more than ever, small and medium-sized family farms need our help, and we need theirs – in BC and across Canada.

We are endeavoring to work even more closely with our friends in BC. There are some enthusiastic members there already. There are no simple solutions or answers to the complex issues that farmers in BC face, but we can struggle through these issues together,

*In Solidarity,*  
*Colleen Ross, Vice President (Policy)*

# union farmer quarterly

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*We believe a strong rural community in Canada is an essential part of our national culture. In the National Farmers Union, we work collectively to strengthen the farm community by: building ties between farmers in all parts of Canada, with farmers in other countries and with non-farm people; ensuring all people have access to an adequate, nutritious and safely-produced food supply; promoting equity for women and young people in the farming community; promoting social support systems that permit people in farming communities a good quality of life; promoting the development and maintenance of a Canadian infrastructure to serve Canadian goals in food production and trade; and helping governments to form fair and constructive policies related to food production and food trade.*



# A message from the...



## National President

—by Terry Boehm

Like most of you, I am busy seeding at the time of writing this report. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, I and a number of NFU members took a day off seeding and went to Winnipeg to meet with Dr. Olivier De Schutter, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food. He was on a mission to Canada to look at issues facing our population in obtaining quality nutritious food and issues facing farmers who grow the food.

The NFU co-convened the meeting with the Manitoba Alternative Food Research Alliance. I was particularly impressed with all the presenters who gave clear, concise reports in their allotted 5-minute time slots. We spoke on a number of issues from Supply Management, Canadian Wheat Board, Canadian Grain Commission, food regulations, the cattle and hog sectors, farm numbers, youth in agriculture, direct marketing, corporate concentration and control, land grabbing, organic agriculture, intellectual property schemes, seeds, and trade agreements. As part of my presentation I emphasized the democratic structure of the NFU with its place for women and youth and how policy is formulated -- in contrast to check-off organizations and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture. We also spoke of the destruction of institutions and the rapid pace that the Harper government is dismantling anything that gave power to farmers, and that these institutions had been created in recognition of the necessity to balance power in order for farmers to have any form of economic and social justice. We prepared a dossier of a number of our briefs and wrote a special brief for this meeting, which is summarized elsewhere in this issue.

This was De Schutter's first mission to a so-called developed country. At the end of his mission he produced a preliminary report which is posted on our website. The Harper government derided him and his report, calling him ill-informed and patronizing. Our

experience meeting with him was just the opposite. He and his staff were very engaged and truly interested in our presentations, which he followed with penetrating questions and requests for further documentation in certain areas.

Unfortunately, our federal government today sees its role as doing anything to advance corporate interests and does not, I am afraid, even understand the concept of public interest and government's mandate to advance the public interest.

This spring, while I was in Europe, I attended a conference in Brussels on land grabbing. This was an opportunity to hear about the work Europeans were doing on this subject. One of the striking aspects was that large pension funds are investing in farmland grabs. In Canada this is also the case. The European organizations felt that there was some opportunity to influence the investment practises of pension fund groups as a starting point. One of the things that I pointed out in a discussion on food speculation is that we need to realize that this so-called run-up of food prices has not resulted in anything more than the return to the nominal values farmers received in the mid-1970s, and that food prices often have little to do with farmgate prices.

I would also like to point out that in light of all the cutbacks that agriculture and other sectors are experiencing at the moment, we could actually expand services if this country engaged in an intelligent royalty policy in regard to the plundering of our natural resources. Instead, we are virtually giving them away. Canada and our provinces have some of the lowest royalty rates in the world.

In closing, I would like to thank all of you who have supported the NFU with your memberships and generous donations.

*In Solidarity, Terry Boehm*





# A message from the...



## Women's President

— by Joan Brady

The National Farmers Union Women's Advisory (WA) meets on a fairly regular basis. It is important that we stay connected in order to deal with the issues and opportunities that arise. More important, the frequent teleconferences allow the Women's Advisory members to stay in touch and support each other with the various activities and initiatives that occur within our respective provinces and as part of our positions. Most recently, our conversations have drifted into a discussion about clarifying the role of the Women's Advisory and what it should seek to accomplish.

Historically, the Women's Advisory has dealt with issues that have an impact upon women farmers directly and upon farm families as a whole. The NFU Women have an archive that contains a solid body of research that examines the role of women on the farm, acknowledging both their vital role in decision-making and operation of the farm as well as the often-unrecorded economic impact of their work. It includes assessment of policy and its effects on the futures and livelihoods of farm families. Much of this work relates to and echoes the various principles and policies that have been long held by the NFU. Not surprising, considering the dual role of the women's positions is to both encourage the participation of women at all levels of the NFU and to make sure that their perspective and expertise is available and included in all the Union's work.

As with any leader in an organization, each WA member brings her own particular skill set to the job. Each Women's Advisor works with other Regional leaders to promote the NFU and affect

policy at local, provincial and federal levels. Each Region is also organized somewhat differently and requires varied assistance and participation from the Women's Advisor. And of course, each Women's Advisor is an active farmer, and often a mother and wife dedicated to the nurture and development of her family. Time is often at a premium and choices and priorities must be made. Defining our role as a Women's Advisor is necessary to make respectful use of time and talents.

For 2012, the WA has decided not to publish their fundraising calendar, possibly making it a bi-annual effort. Instead, we will determine our activities based on the great work that has come before. We hope to continue to build on past research, perhaps a continuing exploration of how current agricultural policy affects farm women, their families and their communities. Or, as discussed at a recent meeting, the NFU Women could facilitate the preservation and updating of some of that earlier work to make it accessible electronically.

We certainly encourage all NFU members to offer their thoughts on the topic of "the Role of the NFU Women's Advisory" and where its energy and expertise should be directed. Please contact me, Kathleen Charpentier or any other Women's Advisor. Your comments and input are appreciated.

*In Union, Joan Brady*



# A message from the...



Cammie Harbottle

## Youth President and Youth Vice President



Paul Slomp

For the past five years the NFU youth have met annually for a weekend of scheming and dreaming about our role as young farmers in the NFU, and of how we can help to create a brighter future for ourselves, our communities, and for generations to come. In the past, we held national meetings, bringing 2 members from each region to a different location in Canada each year. This enabled us to build a national identity as the NFU youth and to establish networks across the country. It did, however, leave us yearning for an opportunity to get more young farmer members involved on a regional level. In response, we decided to hold several smaller meetings across the country this year on the same weekend, with a focus on activities and issues specific to our locals and regions. As it turned out, one meeting was held in Red Deer, Alberta, and one in Kingston, Ontario.



*Photo: Participants of the Region 7 Alberta Youth Event. (left to right) Lisa Lundgard, Angela Kozlowski, Blake Hall, Kristen Carlson and Mike Kozlowski.*

The regions highlighted the local successes, challenges and opportunities of young farmers and farm projects. The Red Deer contingent pointed out a number of challenges that seem to ring true across the country, including: access to land; the right to sell food (or regulating the small farmers to death); farm labor; the need for a cohesive voice (which we are currently working to build); and the lack of health benefits for young farmers. They also identified a number of opportunities for young farmers. As the local food movement continues to build, both rural and urban populations are seeking out direct connections with their food and farmers. Farm apprenticeship programs are popping up across the country and the need for young farmers to fill the boots of older, retiring farmers is increasingly recognized. The power of the Union's democratic structure was acknowledged by the youth and fueled a discussion around how this and other aspects of the Union can be used to pursue and engage more young farmers across Canada. Ideas included setting up NFU youth chapters at agricultural colleges and universities; organizing a Union-based medical plan, disability coverage, farm and vehicle insurance; putting together a farm business primer; and bolstering youth participation in activities of the locals. All are very valuable insights that will be brought to the national table.

With the aim of maintaining a national connection, all three meetings met via Skype video link at the end of the weekend. It was an interesting way to engage members from across the country and left us – and me in particular – with an awareness of the work that still needs to be done on a ground level, namely youth membership building. In coming years we intend to alternate on an annual basis between national and regional youth meetings to continue to build the national body that is the NFU

*(continued on page 22...)*



# Farmers, the Food Chain and Agriculture Policies in Canada in Relation to the Right to Food

- by Cathy Holtslander

The NFU convened a special meeting in Winnipeg with Olivier De Shutter, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food so that he could hear directly from farmers during his official visit to Canada in May. The NFU submitted a brief that outlines our perspective on the organization of the food chain and its impacts on the right to food. The full document is posted on our website.

In our submission we summarized NFU policy positions and information that you are no doubt familiar with – including the dramatic losses in the number of farmers, particularly young farmers and the simultaneous expansion of the biggest farms, the gap between rising grocery store food prices and the continuing low prices that farmers receive, the relationship between expanding agricultural exports and imports and the increase in overall farm debt, the concerns we have with CETA in regard to seed saving and local procurement, the way the Canadian Wheat Board was dismantled and our concern over the continuing attacks on Supply Management from those promoting the Trans Pacific Partnership trade deal.

Regarding trade agreements, we pointed out that they are primarily about helping global corporations obtain access to markets that are currently served by independent local and regional businesses, and thus the “growth” so optimistically predicted is really the expansion of markets for big business at the expense of smaller enterprises’ existence. We also stated that these agreements go beyond trade to protect investors by placing limits on what elected governments can regulate in the public interest.

We also highlighted the emerging land grab issue, and how even in Canada land is being bought up by investors and either run as a corporate farm or rented out. The investors’ focus is on having a predictable revenue stream that is competitive with other share-holder investment possibilities, thus

making protecting the soil and water for the future a low priority.

In terms of the way government agriculture policies are developed and implemented, we discussed how the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) allows agri-business and food manufacturing lobby groups to influence regulations, and how the CFIA’s dual mandate of promoting food safety and expanding exports means that rules often help Canada’s biggest food companies compete globally regardless of the impact on Canada’s farmers. We also outlined our concerns with the poor processes around regulation of GMOs in Canada, and the potential for GMO wheat and alfalfa to be introduced against the will of farmers and consumers. We showed evidence that Canada’s farm safety net programs favour the biggest farms due to the design of the programs and high cap (\$3M per farm) on maximum payments.

We pointed out that our federal government opposes climate protection measures. Farmers bear a heavy burden of losses caused by increasingly frequent weather extremes. The shift towards self-funding insurance programs instead of broad-based disaster coverage means that even the risks of climate change are being shifted onto the backs of farmers.

We also mentioned that agriculture research is increasingly done by and for agribusiness corporations because of both the reduced amount and the way public research dollars are allocated.

We ended our submission with a set of recommended policy directions and provided a set of past NFU briefs that will more fully inform his research.

De Shutter presented his preliminary report on May 16, and will be releasing his final report at a later date.

—nfu—



# Regional Reports



**REGION**

## ONE (New Brunswick)



- by Betty Brown

**O**n April 18, members of the NFU in New Brunswick planted a New Brunswicker apple tree on the lawn of the Legislative Assembly in Fredericton to officially launch the “Local Food, Local Farms Campaign”. The New Brunswicker variety, which was developed by F.P. Sharp who, at the age of 26, opened New Brunswick’s first commercial nursery in 1848, was chosen for the event to highlight the importance of New Brunswick-grown food. Sad to say, the New Brunswick government did not agree, and dug up the tree. When speaking to the media, Jean-Eudes Chiasson referred to the United States’ First Lady, Michelle Obama, and that she planted a vegetable garden on the grounds of the White House to raise the profile and awareness of local and sustainable

food. Apparently neither the Premier of New Brunswick nor his wife have recognized the value of locally grown nor the symbolic value of having the New Brunswicker apple tree gracing the lawn of the Legislature.

The 2011 growing season was disastrous for many farmers. The Canada-New Brunswick Excess Moisture Initiative will provide a \$182.00 per acre payment to affected potato producers whose crop yields were hurt by excessive wet weather last year. To be eligible, producers must demonstrate that they incurred significant additional spraying costs and other extraordinary costs resulting from the disaster.

Global warming gave us temperatures in the 80s F at the end of March, suggesting an early spring. However, a wet cold April and early May indicates we can expect the usual planting time after all.

NFU in NB will host the Region 1 Annual Convention on August 7<sup>th</sup> in Bouctouche. Further information is available on the website and in the NFU in NB newsletter.

Good luck with the planting and hopefully, a good growing summer.

*In Union, Betty Brown*

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## THREE (Ontario)

### REGION



- by Ann Slater

What a difference a year makes! Last year in much of Ontario the spring planting was delayed over and over again by wet and cold weather. This spring in much of the province it has been dry since late March, with seeds getting in the ground ahead of schedule and stories of dust storms, as cultivators hit the fields on dry, windy days. Of course, some farmers have paid a price for the warm weather in March – orchards, especially apple orchards, flowered early and were then hit with hard frosts in April. As usual, we will wait and see what Mother Nature throws our way for the rest of the growing season.

### Region 3 Convention/NFU-O AGM

The Region 3 Convention/NFU Ontario AGM was held on March 17 in Cobourg, east of Toronto. As usual, the resolutions brought forward by locals and members gave an indication of what is on the minds of Ontario farmers. Along with wind turbines, the hot topic in farm papers and coffee shops in recent months has been the Ontario Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (OSPCA) and what it does or does not know about farm animals. At the Region 3 Convention the NFU took the position that the investigation and enforcement of the prevention of cruelty to farm animals should be done by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture. Farmers' right to save seed, support for the horse racing industry, a local food act built around food sovereignty and compensation for losses from wildlife were some of the other topics brought forward to the Convention.

### Stepping Back and Stepping Up

Following the Regional Convention, Linda Laepple stepped down as the Region 3 Women's Advisor and Mike Tremblay as a Regional Councilor. Karen Eatwell stepped into the Women's Advisory position while Charlie Nixon

and Gwenn French are now Regional Councilors. Thanks to Linda and Mike for their contributions and welcome to Karen, Charlie and Gwenn. Alvaro Venturelli, Joe Dama and myself continue as Region 3 National Board members, Coral Sproule as Youth Advisor and Peter Dowling as a Regional Councilor.

Along with the changes on Regional Council a number of members have taken on new positions at the local level, with several new local presidents and local directors elected in recent months. The Ontario NFU office has also seen a change in personnel, with the resignation of Marion Watkins and the hiring of Sarah Bakker, an NFU member from Bobcaygen, as the new Regional Office Administrator. Welcome to Sarah and a big thank you to Marion.

### Council Planning Session

In early May, Regional Council members made their way by train or car to the big city of Toronto for a day-long planning session. By the end of the day we had plans on how to provide additional support to locals and to strengthen communications across the NFU in Ontario over the coming year. At the same time we will continue to address the loss of small abattoirs, the farm income crisis, the loss of democracy, CETA, GM alfalfa, farmland preservation, and supply management – on both the positive side and the need for better opportunities for new entrants and farmers selling produce direct to eaters.

A Region 3 (Ontario) e-news update is sent out by the national office each week. If you would like to receive it, send your email address to [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca) and ask to be added to the Ontario member email list.

### CETA

Municipalities across Ontario, large and small, continue to pass resolutions requesting an exemption from CETA. The provincial government seems convinced CETA will bring great benefits. The NFU wrote to the Premier in April, asking that the province not sign off on the deal. As of the middle of May, we have had no response.

*In Union, Ann Slater*





## REGION

**FIVE (Manitoba)**

- by Ian Robson

**N**FU Region 5 members have been voicing concern and working hard to help forward the cause of family farmers. Whether it is about farm debt, marketing power and structures, or thoughtfully talking with neighbours, each of us strives to uphold the principles of the NFU. Most farmers understand these principles, which are basically about working together for our shared interest, as opposed to the interests of corporations that seek to limit their liability and off-load costs onto society (such as the road damage from trucking when railways limit our shipping options).

Corporate power seeks to take as much revenue from the farmers as possible – think railways, think elevator companies, think processors, and think traders. They have all developed associations to lobby the government to bring in measures that will make business easier for corporations – namely, lower corporate taxes and less regulation. This has been done in the past and the results were not good for the farmer then, and will not help us now.

When farmers challenged the corporations we achieved the Canadian Grain Commission, the Canadian Wheat Board, and Supply Management. Organized farmers got the Co-ops, Cash Advance program, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA), third-party inspection of product claims (such as fertilizer), food grading and safety—even Medicare. With these, and with public plant breeding research, Canada created a great position for itself in the world. Yet this new “Harper Government” says such services, structures and programs are not needed. Harper is even trading off these benefits in deals with other countries to satisfy private investors. In the new federal vision, only much larger scale industrial farming is to be encouraged, leaving no room for the family farm.

Ag Minister Gerry Ritz acted undemocratically and did not consult with farmers before he went his reckless way in October of 2011 and introduced Bill C-18 to destroy our Canadian Wheat Board. On December 15, 2011 the Bill was passed. What reward will Mr. Ritz receive? Mayo Schmidt, CEO of Viterra, was lucky to get a multi-million dollar bonus from selling out to a company that looks a bit like an investment house. CWB President and CEO Ian White, whose pay of around \$700,000 (twice the former CWB CEO Adrian Measner's pay) is not likely to get the kind of reward Mayo Schmidt threshed out when his job is done. Please get involved by supporting the court cases to recover the CWB or have the value of the CWB returned to farmers so we don't lose what is left of the agency to some privatized scheme.

Canola growers have learned that clubroot has arrived in Manitoba, showing that Nature does rule over us. Do lots of research, but the best advice would be to keep longer rotations and clean equipment. Know your seed source and the health of the soil it came from.

Region 5 has been encouraging the Provincial Government to support local abattoirs, improve crop Insurance, and to improve young farmer/beginning farmers programs. We are encouraging shelterbelt programs and asking for more action to support the struggle to maintain the Canadian Wheat Board's single desk selling.

Region 5 Convention is being held on July 14, 2012 at Onanole, MB. Alberta holistic management farmer and NFU Board member, Peter Eggers, will be a guest speaker. He will speak on using holistic principals to raise sheep, cattle, and grains on his farm; his trip to Australia to raise awareness of GMO wheat; and what he learned from farmers there regarding the loss of the Australian Wheat Board. NFU President Terry Boehm will also speak on the work of the NFU, and the Manitoba Minister of Agriculture has been invited. Please talk to your neighbours and invite them to attend.

Be safe and have a great season.

*In Union, Ian Robson*



## SIX (Saskatchewan)

### REGION



- by Ed Sagan

This winter has been busy for us in the NFU, trying to stop the federal government from destroying every good farm policy that we have and turning the clock back 100 years. They're taking power away from us and giving it to the multinationals. They're trying to destroy the CWB, but we're fighting them in court - all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada if necessary. They're planning to destroy the tree farm in Indian Head that has been growing trees for shelterbelts and farmyards in western Canada for 111 years. They want to sell off the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) community pastures that have served the farmers and ranchers well since the end of the Dirty Thirties. They're turning the Canadian Grain Commission into something that won't work for farmers anymore. And they're taking even more power away from us by allowing the sale of Viterra to Glencore United, an international commodity company.

The CFIA announced that it has quit regulating fertilizers. Now, it's buyer beware. It seems that this off-loading of regulatory responsibility is a never-ending story. Announcements of cut-backs and roll-backs like this keep coming out as the list of changes flowing out of the federal budget slowly trickle out.

Canada's secret offers to the European Union in CETA trade negotiations were leaked and posted on the Trade Justice Network's website. Environmental, labour, indigenous, culture, social justice, and farm groups are all concerned and working together to raise awareness and get people to take action to stop CETA from going ahead. We also have to keep an eye on the continuing priority of negotiating individual trade deals with other countries that benefit multinationals but not Canada.

We have a big fight on hand against the federal Tories who are ruling this country as "Dictators". We have to stop them now!

On a regional level, we held fundraising events for the CWB Directors' legal action near Raymore on Jan. 22, and at Earl Grey on Feb. 26. Both were very

successful, and I have to thank all the farmers who came out as well as the CWB Directors who were in attendance.

On April 13 we had a District Meeting near Swift Current. Board member Dixie Green helped with the meeting. Stewart Wells gave a presentation on the legal action against the federal government over the Wheat Board.

I was also invited to attend a CWB Alliance meeting in Regina on March 2 & 3. We heard lawyers speak about our fight against the federal Tories who had no problem breaking the law of Canada, yet as citizens of Canada we have to abide by the law.

On June 27 and 28 we will hold our Regional Convention at St. Michael's Retreat in Lumsden, north of Regina. I am asking every NFU member in Saskatchewan to sign up two new members for this year. We need additional members to keep the NFU strong in the face of all the challenges we have to deal with.

*In Solidarity, Ed Sagan*

### A word from Glenn Tait, Region 6 Board Member:

A few weeks ago I manned a booth for the NFU at Agrimex, the Battleford's annual spring farm trade show. Attendance was light at the show and with every second stall selling riding lawnmowers, I felt a little out of place. As the NFU is just about the only organization left in Saskatchewan that will still fight for the farmer I was hoping for a few questions from the passers-by, but as usual those that don't know us believe they don't want to know us.

In the three days of the show only three non-member farmers stopped to say something. Each of them was glad to see the end of the CWB, each had a different reason, and each of the reasons was untrue. The estimated benefit of the single desk for wheat is roughly the same as the elevation charges for that same wheat. With the end of the single desk and the elevator companies now able to compete for our grain so we can make more money, that means that they will now elevate, store, and load our wheat for free, right?

*In Union, Glenn Tait*



## REGION

**SEVEN (Alberta)**

- by Jan Slomp

**W**e have just experienced the morning after of another Alberta Tory majority

election result. We had hoped so much to bring them down to a minority position, which was needed to bring law making down from Calgary corporate office towers and back to the Edmonton legislature where it belongs. Rural discontent about draconian legislation in Bills 19, 24, 36 and 50 which allow government to dictatorially strip landowners of rights resulted in some lost seats for the Tories, but not enough to alter their course significantly. The oil and gas sector will continue its dominating role in the economy.

Agriculture and other economic sectors will continue to suffer from a high dollar, high labor costs, and the highest electricity prices in the country.

At our last National Convention a resolution was passed calling for a stop to hydraulic fracturing (fracking). In February, shortly after an oil well blowout in Innisfail, due to fracking of a nearby well that caused toxic pollutants to contaminate farmers' fields, the NFU issued a news release calling for a moratorium on the practice. In response to mounting opposition in Quebec and the Maritimes, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers CAPP) issued new voluntary fracking guidelines for its members in the fall of 2011. It is important to note that they only can count a portion of oil companies in their ranks to comply, as most companies do not belong and so are not following these recommendations.

CAPP's new operating practices guidelines include:

- Publicly disclosing chemical ingredients used in fracking fluid.
- Better identifying and managing the risks associated with the fluids and ultimately increasing the market demand for safer fluids.
- Developing domestic water-well sampling programs and participating in regional groundwater monitoring programs.
- Designing and installing wellbores in a manner that maintains integrity before fracking begins.
- Ensuring water withdrawal limits are not exceeded, monitoring water sources and collecting and reporting water use data.

- Identifying, evaluating and mitigating potential risks of transporting, handling, storing and disposing of fluids used in fracking.

Besides demanding that CAPP's voluntary guidelines become mandatory, the NFU is asking for additional conditions to be met.

Currently the industry operates on self-policing. That needs to stop. We need a truly independent inspection agency that is fully in charge of enforcing the rules. Inspectors need to be present on site, during drilling, fracking and removal of fracking fluids. The Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) and/or Alberta Environment in its current form are unfit to do policing, as they have become the facilitators instead of the regulators of the energy sector.

Many rural dwellers have experienced compromised well water as a result of oil and gas exploration in their neighbourhoods. Companies and regulatory authorities dampen the outcry by doing some mitigation – and often also blame the wells for being contaminated naturally because baseline testing has rarely been done. Following some mitigation the companies force landowners to sign confidentiality agreements, thus camouflaging the facts and maintaining the public perception that fracking practices are safe. Hence CAPP's statements that after the exploration of hundreds of thousands of wells there is no documented case of ground water being compromised. Confidentiality agreements of this nature must become illegal as they prevent public interest from prevailing.

The first hearing of Jessica Ernst's lawsuit against EnCana and the ERCB started on April 26th in Drumheller. We are eager to follow the proceedings as they will likely force both the oil and gas sector and the Alberta government to clean up their act.

We NFU farmers are still licking wounds from the loss of the CWB single desk. None of us knows how bad marketing of grain will be after August 1st. That is particularly true for members of the Battle River Railway Cooperative, as they go from operating in a common-sense marketplace with predictable, rational outcomes and now enter a dark tunnel of uncertainty. It is very important that we support former directors of the CWB with funds to assist their legal action to either get the single desk restored or get compensation for grain farmers who have seen their tools for being a player in the market place destroyed.

*In Solidarity, Jan Slomp*



## EIGHT (B.C./Peace River)

REGION



- by Peter Eggers

In February I was part of a delegation that spoke against the introduction of Genetically Modified Wheat in Australia. The tour was organized by Greenpeace as part of their anti-GM Wheat campaign. The word was that introduction of GM wheat is to happen by 2015. But the biotech companies want introduction to happen in Canada, the US, and Australia at the same time for the simple reason that it would give the country that does NOT introduce GM wheat a competitive advantage. This is the wish of the patent holding biotech corporations!

Matt Gehl from Regina, Saskatchewan and Ross Phelps from Emerald, Queensland were also part of the delegation. We informed people about how Canada averted the introduction of GM wheat in 2004 and gave a farmer perspective on the economics of growing wheat.

What was absolutely horrifying is the information I gathered on the consequences of the demise of the Australian Wheat Board. Farmers there were talking about the bad wheat prices. \$145-\$160 is all they had been offered. They need \$200 to break even. Forward contracting was difficult because you never had what the contract specified so you received large discounts. When I asked, every farmer wanted the Board back. There might be a farmer who was glad to see the AWB gone but I have yet to meet him, is what one farmer told me.

We travelled to Sidney in New South Wales. From there we went to Canberra, the Australian capital, then to Horsham in Victoria and to Western Australia. It appeared that there was not much interest in GM of any kind among

Australians. There are some good reasons for that. Having drought for 10 years or more brought a lot of financial stress, and these GM technologies would force them to buy seed every year, adding to costs. The farmers also know that there is a price discount for GM canola of \$25 to \$60 dollars per tonne on the world market. I actually saw a study by Julie Newman from Perth, WA that compared Canadian canola prices with non-transgenic canola from Australia. The study shows a \$63 discount for Canadian canola since the introduction of transgenic technology. Now that is a lot of money! In fact if you take the price discount and the cost of using the patented seed, her study suggests the Canadian farmer did not gain one dollar by having adopted that technology. In Australia they still have non-GM and GM canola segregated.

The Roundup Ready canola is also not working that well because of the weed spectrum they have in their fields. Roundup does not kill their biggest grassy weed. Some farmers are also being advised not to use glyphosate any more because of its harmful effect on the soil. There is labelling of GM products on food by law so that the consumer has a choice and thus decreases marketability of those products containing GM.

Overall we felt good to have done the tour and we had great weather. Where can you go swimming in the ocean in Canada in February?

*In Union, Peter Eggers*

Start Making Your Plans

**2012 National Convention  
November 22—24, 2012  
Hilton Garden Inn, Saskatoon**

*See back page for details.*





# Governance, mandates and the Canadian Grain Commission

—by Terry Boehm

The Harper government has announced that it will be supplying funding to aid the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) to achieve full cost recovery. In other words, it is removing public funding from the CGC.

The CGC is a national institution created 100 years ago to stop some of the abuses that farmers regularly experienced when they delivered their grain. They were cheated on grades, weights, dockage and payments. After long agitation by farmers, the CGC was created under Section 13 of the Canada Grain Act of 1912 with the specific mandate to “act in the interests of the grain producers.” Farmers now had an independent body where it was their right to have the CGC grade their grain and whose word was final in regard to grades and weights. This was done in recognition of the severe power imbalance a farmer faced when dealing with a large grain company.

To make sure that it was able to fulfill its mandate, the governance of the CGC was very carefully constructed to balance powers within the institution itself and to make sure it would be relatively free of political interference by governments.

With three Chief Commissioners, any disputes at the head of the organization could be settled by majority decision. They also form a safeguard to prevent a single powerful individual from taking the Commission in directions that either harmed farmers or for which it was not intended. The Commissioners’ seven-year terms of office are longer than the maximum five-year terms of governments in order to prevent the threat of dismissal with each change of government. The funding of the Commissioners through the public service administration, and not via the Ministry of Agriculture, was put in place to prevent interference by the Minister. In addition, to ensure that the three Chief Commissioners fulfilled their duties, six Assistant Commissioners were appointed and paid separately from the Commission to give them the independence to raise issues if the Chief Commissioners acted outside the mandate of the CGC or in some other harmful way.

The importance to the economy of Canada of grain and of grain producers’ fair treatment is and was widely recognized, and for that reason this balancing of powers within the institution itself was carefully built in. It was also well known that financing the CGC fully from the public purse returned great dividends to the country as a whole.

The Harper government’s full cost recovery scheme is another display of its inability to act in the public interest. In addition, it has refused to appoint Assistant Commissioners for some time and has not allocated funding to these positions.

The government is also proposing to change the CGC’s mandate to be “as acting in the interests of the country as a whole including the grain producers”. This would be a fundamental and profound error. While the change may seem benign and even democratic, it would destroy the rationale and scope of the CGC. It would put the CGC in the position where it could not differentiate between grain producers and grain companies, railways, and the myriad of other interests in the food system. These interests are often in conflict and adversarial. The interest of the farmer, for example, is to be paid the highest possible price for the quality of the grain he /she is offering for sale. It is in the grain company’s interest to pay the lowest price possible. The company can accomplish this through making grain grades very difficult for the farmer to achieve or by simply not buying the grain for its proper grade and quality, stating it has no demand for it, however it will buy the grain for a lower grade and price.

The CGC also works to maximize the grading possibilities in any given harvest where particular problems in production may show up, such as bleaching from excess moisture conditions at harvest time. It adjusts the grading tolerances to work for farmers because it knows blending will take place that will upgrade the prairie crop as a whole because the region is vast and very rarely would all the crops across the region run into problems. In contrast, grain companies would want grading to be strictly defined so that they could absolutely minimize the price they paid to those farmers with difficulties and thus capture for themselves all the benefits of upgrading by blending. This is but one example of where the interests of farmers and grain companies are in conflict.

Governance and mandates are critical to the functioning and results achieved by an institution. We need to maintain the CGC with its original intent, mandate and governance if we are to have any economic justice for farmers in the grain trade. Grain companies are not agitating for a change in the mandate of the CGC for nothing – they know their interests. Farmers need to know theirs!

—ntu—



# UN Committee Adopts Land Guidelines in Rome

- by Kalissa Regier

The United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS) held a special session in Rome, Italy on May 11, 2012 to formally adopt the *Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of National Food Security*. Over three years have passed and many changes to the structure of the CFS have occurred since the process to develop the guidelines began. The 2009 reform of the Committee opened it up to unprecedented participation by stakeholders beyond the governments. The guidelines represent the first major process undertaken by the committee since the reform.

Unlike many of the UN bodies, the structure of the CFS allows unlimited interventions during its meetings by all stakeholders. I participated in the three rounds of negotiation of the text of the guidelines as a spokesperson for the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM), a global mechanism for coordinating participation from social movements and NGOs, and as a representative of La Via Campesina and the National Farmers Union. The CSM was allowed five spokespeople at any given time.

Though much can be said to critique the guidelines, I will outline some of the notable advancements that were made in the final text. The text of the guidelines in many places challenges the existing system of land and resource governance as we see it in many parts of the world. Security of tenure is acknowledged as one of the basic prerequisites to food security.

The guidelines contain provisions that recognize and protect “publicly-owned land, fisheries and forests that are collectively used and managed”, in some national contexts referred to as *commons*, as well as their related systems of collective use and management. Chapter 11 on Markets outlines States’ duties to protect local communities, indigenous peoples and vulnerable groups from “land speculation and land concentration; and to regulate land markets to protect social, cultural and environmental values.” Chapter 12 on Investments defines responsible investments, which “should do no harm, safeguard against dispossession of legitimate tenure rights holders and environmental damage, and should respect human rights.” Chapter 12 also mentions that when “States invest or promote investments abroad,” they should ensure that their conduct is consistent

with the protection of legitimate tenure rights and the promotion of food security and recommends the promotion of investment models that “do not result in the large-scale transfer of tenure rights to investors.” Chapter 13 on land consolidation and other readjustment approaches refers to “land banks” and could be used to support demands to transfer long-term land management and ownership to public bodies and civil society land trust.

On the down side, to reach consensus with such a broad range of actors, the text is quite vague and sometimes ambiguous. This remains a strong critique from many of the social movements and others who fight daily against land grabbing and other violations that are continually taking place against farmers around the world. Unfortunately, the contributions from Canada and United States contradicted nearly all of the positions of civil society. Canada, in particular, was adamant from the very beginning that the guidelines must not contain any reference to water. To the dismay of many, due to Canada’s unwillingness to compromise, water is mentioned only briefly in the preface. Unfortunately the Guidelines accept the large-scale transfer of tenure rights, in other words, land grabbing. However, the text contains several safeguards to control this option and its impacts. Our proposal to put a ban on land grabbing was not accepted due to the correlation of forces. However, the safeguards agreed in Chapter 12 could be tactically used at local and national level to organize resistance.

After many long nights and countless emails, global conference calls and sessions in Rome, it is now clear that the process to develop the Guidelines has had many peripheral effects. La Via Campesina and other global alliances have worked together to bring the voices and views of their members on the ground into the global arena. The experience will no doubt strengthen future endeavours, some of which have already begun. Though the question still remains as to whether the United Nations states will elevate the CFS to the role it was designed to play – *the foremost inclusive international and intergovernmental platform dealing with food security and nutrition*. For now, we, as members of La Via Campesina and the National Farmers Union, remain a vital part of the process in our struggle for food sovereignty.

—nfu—



# An active year for the NFU's International Program Committee (IPC)

—by Annette Desmarais

*This article briefly explains some of the IPC's work that was carried out over the past year. As you will see, we've done a lot!*

*Let me begin by acknowledging the financial support received from Inter Pares and the National Farmers Foundation. These grants are critical since they have allowed the IPC to continue to be active across the country and internationally.*

## Food sovereignty workshops

Importantly, the funding we received meant that the NFU was able to contract a part-time IPC Coordinator to coordinate IPC meetings and conference calls; make sure that there is strong communication between the IPC members, the NFU Board and Executive; disseminate information received from La Via Campesina to the IPC and general membership; and prepare funding proposals and reports. Martha Robbins was the IPC Coordinator until August 2011 and we miss her terribly since she left Canada to start graduate studies in Europe. We hope to have a part-time IPC Coordinator in place in the near future.

Over the winter the IPC organized three food sovereignty workshops: the first was held in Guelph, Ontario with 7 participants, the second in PEI with 20 participants, and the last one in Saskatchewan with 14 NFU members. The food sovereignty workshops discussed how to make NFU policy stronger by explicitly integrating a food sovereignty approach. Since the workshop results have not yet been analyzed it is too early to predict exactly how the workshop project will help shape NFU policy. However, there is no doubt that the workshops were an important step in grounding food sovereignty at the local level, broadening the discussion of food sovereignty within the NFU membership, and raising people's level of understanding of food sovereignty and what it means for changes within NFU policy.

Once the IPC evaluates the three food sovereignty workshops held to date the committee will then decide whether or not to organize similar events or perhaps some variation of the workshops in other provinces. In the meantime the IPC has agreed that we will produce a food sovereignty pamphlet for distribution across the country.

## IPC coordinates NFU's international participation

A number of NFU representatives participated in international events where they worked with other Via Campesina members and increased their understanding of food sovereignty:

- Two NFU representatives (Colleen Ross and Kalissa Regier) participated in La Via Campesina's mid-term conference held in Berder, France from March 17-21, 2011.
- Terry Boehm (NFU president) participated in the Farmers' Rights conference in Ethiopia in Nov. 2011.
- Kalissa Regier was elected to represent La Via Campesina youth in the Civil Society Mechanism of the Committee on World Food Security in Rome.
- Last summer Reg Phelan and Annalisa Schoppe participated in La Via Campesina's agro-ecological training in Chimaltenango, Guatemala. The meeting involved sharing of information and knowledge about agro-ecological techniques among Via Campesina representatives from various countries, and exploring the links between agro-ecology and food sovereignty.
- NFU Youth Advisor, Coral Sproule, participated in a farmers' training program organized by La Via Campesina youth that was held in Argentina in October 2011. The program included workshops on food production and the struggle for food sovereignty and gender equality.
- Over the year the IPC made sure that NFU members who participated in international events shared their experiences by publishing articles in the *Union Farmer Quarterly* and/or the *NFU Newsletter*.

This is an impressive list of activities! Clearly, the NFU remains an active member of La Via Campesina. We can certainly expect this to continue over this coming year since Inter Pares has just renewed their funding with the NFU for the continuation of the IPC's *Connecting Canadian Farmers to Food Sovereignty Project*. —nfu—



# The Kootenay Country Co-op Story

- by Abra Brynne

*This is the second in our Union Quarterly series about co-operatives and food sovereignty, celebrating the International Year of Co-operatives.*

The Kootenay Country Store Co-operative is heading into its 38<sup>th</sup> year and has come a long way since its humble beginnings as a volunteer-run food buying club in the mid 1970s. Based in the south-eastern British Columbia community of Nelson (population 10,000), the Co-operative is a member-owned grocery store that has never lost sight of the founding vision of healthy food, sourced as closely and as fairly as possible.

The Co-op opened its first storefront in Nelson in 1985 but serves a much broader geographic community, with 10,600 members and counting. When the Co-op was a fledgling organization, part of its appeal was that it was one of the few places in the area where people could source healthy and alternative whole foods. Almost forty years later, bulk grains, tofu and free-range meat can be found at the large chain grocers. However, despite the competition from those with much greater buying power than the one-store Co-op will ever have, its shoppers continue to be loyal and supportive, with 86% of the annual \$10M in sales to our members.

The Co-op recognized early on that when the likes of Safeway started carrying rice milk and alternative potato chips, we could never compete on price – particularly when alternative, health-oriented products are used as “loss leaders” in the chain grocers. So we focused on our core strengths: we are a values-based business that strives to provide excellent and informative customer service and a product line that furthers our vision of healthy communities.

The Co-op’s principles are apparent in our business practices every day, guided by policy and by product standards. Access to wholesome foods is supported by having a lower mark-up on the nutritional basics, such as dairy and dairy-alternatives, and the whole grains, and other dry goods

available in an expansive bulk section of the store. This lower pricing is made possible by having a higher mark-up on luxury or non-essential items in the store.

Product from local farmers is also pro-actively supported with a lower mark-up than imported goods, as well as through ongoing relationships with local farmers and farm organizations to facilitate mutually supportive business relationships. When the Co-op staff better understand the challenges on the various kinds of farms supplying the store, and the farmers appreciate the constraints the staff deal with in the purchasing habits of the customers - no matter how well informed they might be - the working relationship between the Co-op and its farmer suppliers works well.

*(continued on page 17...)*

## The Kootenay Co-op Statement of Principles:

The Kootenay Co-op is an association which was set up to provide high quality, wholesome food at reasonable prices to residents of Nelson, the Slokan Valley and surrounding areas.

We believe that where possible, such food should be organically produced and that local growers or processors should receive preferential treatment as suppliers.

We believe in the principles of community cooperation and will further this principle through educational programs and any other means available.

We believe in building a truly democratic organization with complete member involvement, where the principle of one member, one vote will be adhered to irrespective of the number of shares held by any individual.







*Photo: One of Kootenay Country Co-op suppliers' farms with brassicas and peas growing in the field.*

Education and outreach to the community are core activities of the Co-op and cover a range of audiences and topics. Long before the term “locavore” entered the common vocabulary, the Co-op was promoting the health and economic benefits of eating whole foods in season with the local production cycles. These ideals are evident in our buying choices across the departments and have been supported with classes, workshops, printed materials and demonstrations.

The Co-op’s income-generating departments (Produce, Grocery, Wellness, and Deli) offer various forms of support to established and fledgling producers and business owners, from providing wholesale pricing information, to assisting in recipe refinements that help the product to meet our store standards, to offering market research and demonstration opportunities for those launching new products.

We have also communicated regularly over the years with business support programs and local farm organizations about the product lines that are not yet being supplied locally. The Co-op has been a supportive testing ground for new crop varieties, packaging options, and recipe variations for local entrepreneurs and start-up or expanding farmers. Many

local businesses have been able to confirm demand for their product and then expand into other markets, based on their experience with the Co-op.

In the early 1990s, when a group of local farmers started an organization to provide organic certification, the Co-op made the commitment to prioritize certified organic product in order to support the fledgling organization and their goal of affordable and credible certification. More recently, another group of farmers created a system of farmer-to-farmer verification of sustainable practices. The Co-op has been involved in the creation of the standards and verification systems of this new organization and accepts its products in the store, in addition to those certified organic.

With over 10,000 members and a 37-year history, the Co-op can’t and doesn’t always please everyone. However, the essence of co-operation, and indeed of any functional community, is compromise – to a point. We have clear boundaries with regard to how we treat our suppliers, staff and members, and purchasing criteria is embedded in our Buying Guidelines. But with so many members, all with their own political perspectives, family sizes, cultural practices, and health considerations, our products and programs are

*(continued on page 18...)*



*(The Kootenay Country Co-op Story, from page 17)*

designed to try to reasonably meet their needs within the framework of our core mission. And where we cannot meet the needs or wishes of shoppers, we know that there are other food outlets in Nelson and the nearby communities that can likely address them.

Like many in the organic and health food sectors, the Co-op has been growing consistently for most of the past two decades. At times the growth rate has been significant enough to challenge our ability to expand the operational infrastructure of the store. However, history has shown the value of ensuring that both staff and board are well trained and understand their roles and responsibilities. The store benefits enormously from the wisdom and contributions of our General Manager, Deirdrie Lang, who has been with the Co-op for 25 years.

The Board has worked to increase its capacity, with regular training and performance evaluations. The Board focuses on its fiduciary responsibilities and its governance role, ensuring that the Co-op adheres to its mission and remains viable and vibrant for the long term. An analysis of the existing and needed skill sets for the work before the Board guides our recruitment process and addresses our responsibility to perpetuate a board that is professional and contains the necessary knowledge-base to meet our responsibilities.

The store also has a comprehensive and progressive staff training program that starts on an employee's first day and offers ongoing educational opportunities based on an employee's interests and department responsibilities within the store. The price structures established for products in the store not only support and promote local product, they also enable a pay scale and benefits package that offers a reasonable living wage for staff. The starting wage across all departments is above the provincial minimum wage requirements and significantly above industry averages.

While the grocery industry generally tends not to attract career employees, the benefits package and working environment at the Co-op has succeeded in retaining a high number of long-term employees, with some exceeding 20 years. The advantage to the store of retaining experienced



*Photo: Interior of the Kootenay Country Co-op store showing local vegetables for sale.*

and knowledgeable staff is obvious and can be seen in the quality of service provided to our members and the effective mentoring that occurs within staff.

As the Co-op has grown and served a larger and larger percentage of the Nelson and area population, our role as an “anchor” store in Nelson’s thriving downtown has become increasingly recognized. Over the years, member surveys have confirmed repeatedly our commitment to remaining part of Nelson’s admittedly short main street.

By any reasonable standards, we outgrew our current leased location approximately 6 years ago. After much searching and many conversations with realtors, landowners, architects and our landlords, we have finally secured a large enough venue. Anchoring one end of our main street is a 17,000 square foot building that has long been a chain grocer. The building owners were interested in having the Co-op move in and were willing to sell us the building and accompanying parking lot.

After so many years of searching, the reality is finally upon us. We are actively engaging with our members and the community to help determine exactly what our new store should be. We look forward to soon being in a much larger space where we can better serve both our members and the community at large and continue our role in fostering a thriving foodshed.

—nfu—



# Creating space for alternative models of agriculture

—by Ann Slater

In the midst of a discussion on sustainable agriculture, ag economist, John Ikerd made the comment that organic farming can produce as much per acre as industrial agriculture but it takes more know-how and it takes two or three times as many people. He then posed the question, "What is wrong with that?"

The comment was made in relation to his observation that the present agriculture system in the United States and Canada has lots of agricultural production but suffers from a lack of employment. It is a system that has failure built into it, requiring thousands of farmers to fail each year so that others can expand and allow agriculture to continue along the industrial path of specialization, standardization, consolidation and fewer farmers. As Ikerd noted, if we continue in this system, ten years from now half of us will be gone.

Ikerd is a Professor Emeritus of Agricultural & Applied Economics at the University of Missouri, and an advocate for sustainable agriculture. He was in Ontario in March at the invitation of the Organic Council of Ontario, speaking to the organic community and to farm leaders and government staff about sustainable agriculture. Both the NFU and Ikerd describe sustainable agriculture as agriculture that is ecologically sound, socially just and economically viable. Agri-business corporations, driven only by economic value for their shareholders, will not make investments for the future, for the good of the environment or for the good of society.

Although Ikerd's description of the dominant industrial agricultural system as a dismal failure is bleak, he also brings a message of hope. Despite the overwhelming focus of government ag policy on one model, some farmers have continued to find ways to break out of the industrial system and create alternative visions and models for a food system on their farms and in their communities. Organic is one of the alternative models, but there are many others, all of which need to be supported through public policies. Ikerd suggests that since

none of us are smart enough to know which of these alternative models will be most sustainable in the long run, space needs to be available to explore the variety of alternatives which focus on social value and care of the land, along with a fair return to farmers.

As farmers, we are told that consumers only want food that is cheap, convenient and quick. Ikerd challenged that message, referring to research in the US which has shown that up to one-third of US consumers are willing to pay for something different, whether that be organic, grass-fed, cage-free or some other alternative. However in the US at most, 10% of food available is 'something different'. The lack of infrastructure to connect those growing and raising food under alternative farm systems with those wanting to buy food with ecological or social values is a major challenge.

In his discussion with the organic community, Ikerd made the point that organic consumers need to be skeptical about organic, since just because food is grown in an ecologically sound way, does not mean it has been grown in a socially-sound manner. Organic eaters generally assume that organic food is grown on small farms that care for the environment, but just having a label 'organic' does not indicate other sustainable values. Whole Foods in the US dominates the organic food system, and just like with any other powerful entity in the economically-driven, industrial food system, their organic customers get what is most profitable for Whole Foods – not what the customer wants and not necessarily with enough return to farmers to ensure farmers can take care of the land and contribute to their own communities.

When asked about the huge challenge we face in moving away from the present system, Ikerd noted he is not optimistic but he is hopeful. Change will not happen fast, but hope is the possibility something good can happen, and that possibility is very much alive.

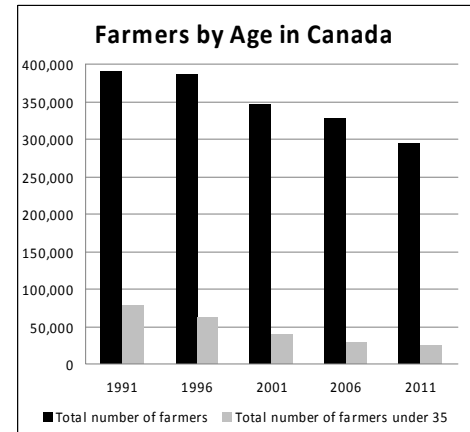
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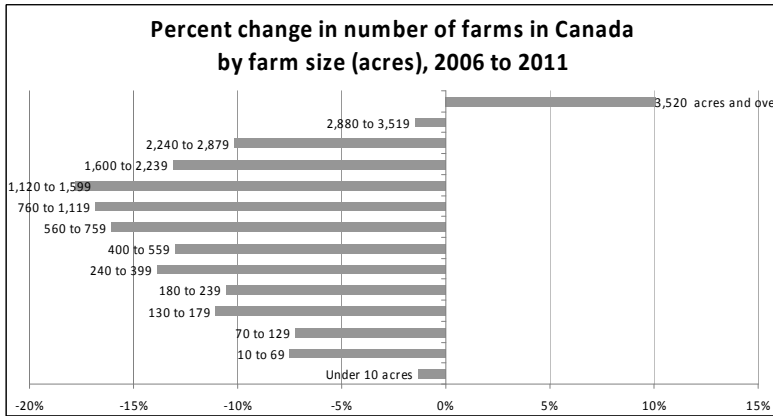
# Making Sense of the Census

- by Cathy Holtlander

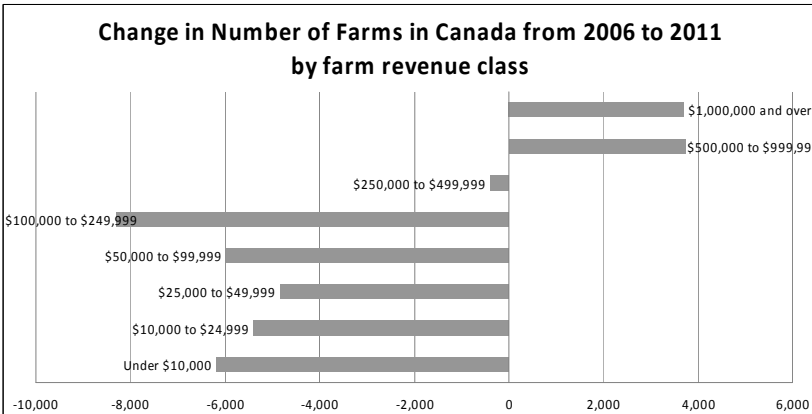
The first batch of 2011 Census of Agriculture data was released in May. This important source of data allows us to put today's situation in a long-term perspective and it helps us put our own experience into the context of the bigger picture.



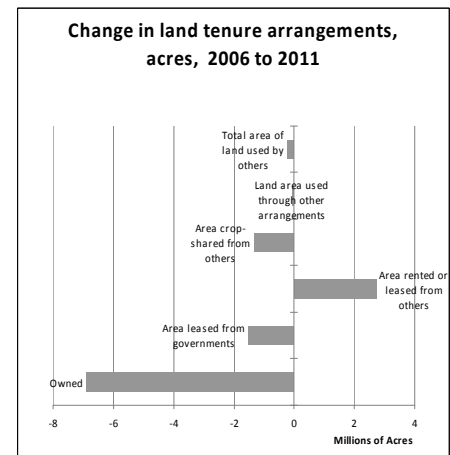
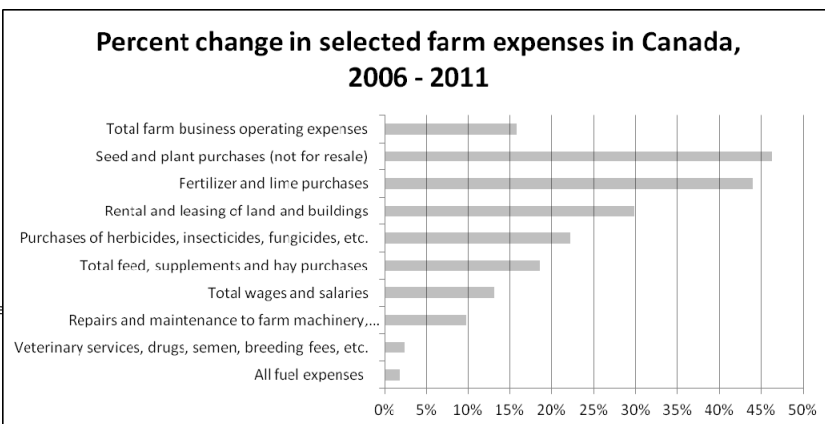
Looking at farm numbers, the age of farmers, and farm size (by revenue and by acreage) we see that the big are indeed getting bigger, and fewer young people are getting into farming.



Looking at the change in farm expenses, we can see that seed, fertilizer, chemicals and land went up the most dramatically, faster than overall farm expenses, reflecting the market power of those input sectors, the rising price of farmland and the continuing shift away from owning and towards renting land.



The NFU will continue using Census data as well as other Statistics Canada publications to support our analysis of the effects that farm and trade policies have on farm families. —nfu—





# Points of Order

- by Cory Ollikka

I am writing this article to open a discussion about resolutions. I am not writing it to be an authority piece on the subject of resolutions. Resolutions serve a role in the democratic process; and if discussion and debate are central to democracy, then who am I to implicitly or explicitly claim to be a central authority on the subject? Hence, I submit the following for your consideration:

Resolutions guide an organization, the NFU in our case. The NFU is guided by resolutions of the Board and Executive committees on matters concerning operational detail. On the highest level, the NFU is guided by policy resolutions. And policies are set by the membership through democratically debated resolutions.

Sounds pretty straightforward so far, but what, you ask, makes for a good quality resolution?



## Here is a short list:

- 1) **The “Be it Resolved...” portion of the resolution must be clear, succinct, give concrete direction for specific action and stand alone.** Practice writing resolutions without “Whereas” statements. Many people confuse the arguments put forth in “whereas” statements for the point of the resolution. This is wrong. The point of a resolution is to guide the actions of the organization, not to make good arguments as to why we need to take those actions. Arguments can be made at the microphone. Resolutions must stand on the merits of what they are asking the organization to do. You might say that resolutions provide the “what”, while the debaters on convention floor argue the “why”.
- 2) **The “Be it Resolved” portion of your resolution must answer every question except “why?” To guide the action of the organization, “what, where, when and how” must be answered to the greatest extent possible.** To be sure, there is risk here, as it’s usually enough to guide the organization with “what” we want it to do. And, certainly, the leadership and administration must be given some flexibility in “how” they carry out our democratic wishes. Certainly. However, there is nothing wrong with giving the best possible directions, and that is the spirit behind including as much “where, when and how” as possible in a resolution.
- 3) **The resolution MUST give direction to the organization, not state lofty actions on behalf of other bodies (this is the “who” part for those smarties who have already surmised that I missed one of the “W’s”).** In other words, it is outright wrong for an NFU resolution to state: “Be it Resolved that the Government of Canada jump off the nearest bridge.” No matter how nice it may sound, that is plainly wrong. We cannot resolve that someone else do something. Rather, a legitimate NFU resolution should read more like: “Be it Resolved that the NFU write letters to the Prime Minister and all Cabinet Ministers strongly suggesting that the Government of Canada jump off the nearest bridge.” *Remember, elections and lobbying move governments, but NFU resolutions only guide the NFU.*
- 4) **The last point I’ll make here is avoid redundancy.** This one is difficult for new and long-time members, alike. The NFU has a great deal of detailed and exceptionally comprehensive policy. Sometimes these policies must change, but if your intention OR your result is to re-state policy that already exists, I suggest you don’t waste anyone’s time. To put a finer point on that blunt one, it’s far better that you use your resolution-writing talents to find new strategies and actions for the organization to carry our policies forward in new circumstances rather than regurgitating what highly-capable members and conventions of the past have already done.

(continued on page 22...)



*(Message from the Youth, from page 5)*

youth and to reach out to young members and non-members on a local and regional level. Next year, we are looking forward to a visit to the grasslands of Alberta. Look out Region 7...we're coming!

On a more personal level, this season brings new challenges and adventure for me, as I head to the fields with a little one in tow-- our son, Keir, was born in January. He hasn't quite got the transplanting down pat, but so far we are having a lot of fun with him. Our community has risen up -- mothers, grandmothers, CSA members -- to help raise him, and for that I am so grateful. It is a true example of a community raising a child!

Another exciting event here in Tatamagouche this winter was a visit from Vandana Shiva. Shiva spent a jam-packed three days touring the Maritimes and speaking to farmers, seed savers, students, and community members. Her final destination was Tatamagouche, where she filled the local United Church and gave a hopeful, inspiring and passionate talk. Vandana Shiva has been fighting a tireless battle for decades, in the name of preserving ecological diversity, maintaining small-scale farming, and resisting the throes of corporate powers. Most recently, she has

been advocating for the maintenance of seed freedom and diversity. In the back room of the church here in Tatamagouche, Shiva met with a group of over 15 small-scale seed producers from around the Maritimes to discuss how to build the capacity of seed savers from the ground up, both within our communities in Canada and around the world. Full of inspiring words, both practical and ideological, Vandana Shiva left us all feeling empowered to continue this ongoing battle. Here in Canada, the NFU plays a critical role in this work and I am continually reminded of how important it is to stand up and speak up, to be part of the voice that is the farmers of this country -- to be part of the NFU.

So I go forth into this season, full of ideas and inspiration... enough to carry me through the long days in the field after sleepless nights in baby-land.

*In solidarity,*

*Cammie Harbottle, Youth President and*

*Paul Slomp, Youth Vice President*

*(Points of Order, from page 21)*

Now that I re-read the list, it strikes me that I have written it in the reverse-order. So, I suggest that as you prepare your resolutions for upcoming conventions, you just start at the bottom of the list and work your way up.

First, take your burning issue and see what the NFU policy manual says about it already. If the issue needs new policy, then write accordingly. If the NFU policy is already in place, then consider new direction/strategy/actions.

Second, make sure your resolution gives direction to the NFU and no one else.

Third, make sure it has all of the "what, where, when and how" that you want in it.

Lastly, as an "acid test", remove all "Whereas..." statements to see if the resolution can stand on its own merits. This will leave the "why" to the debaters on the floor and you will be doubly sure that you have written a great resolution. *(Note: you can add the "whereas..." statements back in if you like, but try to keep them short and few. They don't really impress anyone, anyway.)*

There is much more to be said about resolutions that I will leave to grammarians and parliamentarians of higher calibre. The NFU certainly has a wealth of knowledge and skilled members who can shed further light on this subject.

Good luck to all in your future resolution writing and thanks for your efforts in learning how to steer this great organization from the grassroots!

—nfu—



# The Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

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

*Working with the Family of Paul Beingessner, the National Farmers Union has established an annual literary prize in honour of Paul and his contribution to rural and agricultural journalism. Paul Beingessner was a farmer, an activist, and a writer who defended Canada’s family farms until his tragic death in a farm accident in the spring of 2009. His widely-read and respected weekly columns brought a fresh and progressive perspective to rural and farm issues.*

*Young writers are encouraged to submit their work to the Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing.*

## **Award Criteria and Details:**

- There will be two age categories – 15 years and under, and 16 years to 21 years. An award in the amount of \$500 will be awarded to one essay in each age category for a non-fiction letter or essay 500-1000 words in length.
- The theme for 2012 will be *Cooperatives – An Exercise in Democracy*.
- Deadline for entries is September 30, 2012.
- The prizes of \$500.00 will be awarded at the NFU Convention in November 2012.

All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.

### **Send entries to the National Farmers Union:**

By email: [nfu@nfu.ca](mailto:nfu@nfu.ca)

OR

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

We will confirm that we received your email submission within a week. If you do not get a confirmation email, please resend your entry or phone the office at (306) 652-9465.



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## NFU 43<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention



# November 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup>, 2012

## Hilton Garden Inn Downtown

90- 22<sup>nd</sup> Street East

## Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

### Reserve your hotel room today.

**A block of rooms is being held, but only until October 19, 2012.**

*(Be sure to say it is for the NFU Convention when booking.)*

**Room rates are \$164 (king or 2 queens, includes parking)**

**To make your reservations:**

# **CALL 1-306-244-2311**