

THE union farmer

QUARTERLY

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Cover Photo:

On May 6, 2014, Joan Brady, NFU Women's President (left), Marcella Pedersen, NFU Women's Vice President (middle), and Karen Eatwell, NFU-O President and Region 3 Coordinator (right) participated in a Radio Talk Show on CKNX Radio, Wingham, Ontario, speaking on the family farm, its value to the economy, environment and community as well as on some of the challenges faced by farm families.

Message from the Editor...



—by Carla Roppel

How familiar does this story sound?

Land-locked prairie farmers were suspicious that grain grading was unfair and that dealers were paying them for a lower grade of grain but selling that same grain for a higher grade. Farmers were losing faith in an unfair grain handling system. That is where farmers were at in the early 1900s. And here we are again.

The difference is that back then, the government wanted farmers to stay and continue to farm so the Canadian economy would not be hurt. Today they do not care about farmers. Today, the Conservatives do not talk to any person or group that does not repeat the government's own message back to them. In a sense, this government behaves like some of the students in classes I taught at a community college 20+ years ago. Students felt that it was my job to tell them what they needed to know to pass the test. I, however, felt that it was my responsibility to challenge them to think about what

information they needed and how they would use it to solve the real-world problems they would inevitably face. If the Conservative hench-men had been in my class, they would likely have failed.

Now, back to farmers in the early twentieth century: in 1912, the Canadian government responded to farmer "demand for a national entity to oversee the grain industry" with the *Canada Grain Act* that constituted the Canada Grain Commission. The new Commission had several duties: to regulate and certify grain grades and weights; be responsible for the system of government-owned elevators; inform and educate farmers and elevators about the Commission and its role; and collect grain industry data.

The depression hit farmers hard; the Commission reported that between 1930 and 1938 grain car inspections dropped from 248,000 to 113,000. When the Second World War began in 1939, Canada had a huge harvest and another one in 1940. As described on the Canadian Grain Commission website (<http://www.grainscanada.gc.ca/cgc-ccg/history-histoire/timeline-historique-eng.htm>), "Markets were inaccessible and elevators were full." Surplus grain was stored wherever room could be found and licensed – usually in locations never intended to store grain. Farmers could neither sell grain nor pay their bills.

This, along with wild fluctuations in grain prices, drove many farmers into bankruptcy, which threatened the economic survival of the Western

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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.





—by Jan Slomp

A Message from the President

Debt and Land Tenure

Total farm debt in Canada, which surpassed \$75 billion this spring, has been rising rapidly in the last few decades. How are farmers going to cope with higher interest rates?

In an interview with The Western Producer earlier this year, federal Agriculture Minister Ritz declared that *farmers could handle a doubling of interest rates, as they have the prospects of selling food to a hungry world.* As we now see lower farm gate prices and increasing costs, it seems it is much easier for our fearless federal leader to keep his head in the sand than it is for farmers to keep their heads above water.

In the 70s and 80s the U.S. government (among others) triggered price incentives when stocks-to-use ratios fell below 15-17% for major food crops. When that practice ended and the ratio fell well below 10% in the early 2000s, buyers continued to pay low prices to farmers – their captive suppliers. However, five or six years ago when the ratio approached 5% and major food growing areas reported growing problems, traders could no longer keep farm gate prices low. The resulting relatively higher prices between 2008 and 2013 brought the stocks-to-use ratios back to safer levels again.

During this period of higher farm gate prices, farmers were encouraged to increase fertilizer rates and to join in bidding wars for more land. In the meantime, the government deregulated and further diminished whatever little market power that farmers had. With the policies of agricultural deregulation working well for grain companies, railroads, traders, processors and retailers, who would expect the banking sector to resist jumping on the gravy train and not taking their share from agriculture.

A bank with a significant amount of farmland as collateral on the books looks pretty good in a financial world that faces a crisis about the real value of the U.S. dollar. The speculative value of

land functions as a service to the financial sector, but the cost of that speculation lands on the farmer, who pays to the bank, the interest and principal payments required to purchase that land. Priced way beyond their reach, land is a real and very difficult barrier for new and want-to-be farmers to overcome.

The NFU has always had policy about preventing speculation based on the value of farmland. In the NFU's policy, *Foreign and Corporate Control of Farmland*, we call for a federal Royal Commission to examine, among other things, land use and tenure issues such as “the effect of foreign and non-resident ownership and corporate ownership of farm land... [and] consequences for consumers in terms of food production – domestic versus imported...” The policy further outlines the need to continually monitor tenure and occupancy, to keep those issues under continual public debate and “consistently explore all possible avenues of tenure”.

High debt loads in Canadian agriculture combined with rising input costs and deregulated marketing and transportation structures create volatile positions regarding land ownership and tenure across the country.

The NFU's strong youth engagement indicates they have chosen our grassroots organization as the way to build, through policy and hands on action, a sustainable food system that answers the need of people and the Earth. We must work together to ensure that these young, committed farmers have access to the land they need while at the same time, preventing non-resident or foreign individuals or corporations from taking over Canada's farmland. Together we will continue to shape NFU policies and actions regarding tenure and land use that will enable new generations of prosperous farmers to produce wholesome healthy foods sustainably within their vibrant rural communities.

In Solidarity, Jan Slomp





—by Joan Brady

A message from the Women's President

What's In Our Name?

I am a member of the “Branding Development Working Group” which has been established by the NFU Executive to undertake a “branding development” process. We will be inviting all members to provide information to the process through a survey that will be available online at <http://fluidsurveys.com/nfubrandingsurvey/> or in hard copy as a yellow insert in this *Quarterly*. If you choose to use a paper survey, you can complete it and fax it to 306-664-6226, or mail back to National Office as soon as possible.

Your feedback will tell the working group how NFU members think about the organization, the kind of language you use to describe our organization to yourself and others, and how you would like the NFU to be perceived. The Working Group will have a collection of words and images that are meaningful to members and that can be used to develop a brand that will help the NFU claim its place as a legitimate player in 21st century thinking and policy-making for agriculture. We will work with a graphic designer to develop recommendations for a new look and feel that reaffirms our values in today's language and retains our connection to forty-four years of history.

The process will help us better articulate who we are, as well as our values and goals. We will be able to define more clearly the benefits of membership in or support for the NFU. I urge each person in every farm family, as well as associate members, to complete the survey.

A number of years ago, an NFU member who had attended the Founding NFU Convention in 1969 gave me the commemorative report *Sod-turning '69* containing addresses from the first NFU President, keynote speaker and leaders from the various provinces. The content of that publication paints a picture of strength and resilience, and a

determination to provide a voice for farmers that was distinct from the other industry and government-influenced general farm organizations.

Here's what some of the early visions for what some thought the NFU was and could be:

“The time for action has arrived...we in Manitoba showed that the force of a few can reach the mighty if we use it properly.”

— Ken Singleton, Manitoba

“Let me say to you, at the outset, we don't have any real estate, not many liquid assets ... no money in our treasury. But in my opinion we have something far greater. We have men and women who have proved their ability to go out and fight...”

— Walter Miller, Ontario

We must think not merely about the price of wheat or corn or milk or potatoes – we're thinking about people. If our first interest is not in people, we're not going to succeed. Because what we're really in is a life and death struggle in Canada ...to preserve the few shreds we left of participatory democracy.”

— Alfred Nieforth, Maritimes

To me, the above quotes reflect very much what was meant when the founding members and organizations chose the name “National Farmers Union”. It means that what is important is working together toward our collective interests. These quotes suggest that our members are people of passion and integrity, and they are the assets required to make our organization strong. I see the National Farmers Union as farm families united in celebrating what is right and healthy about farming, while at the same time tackling the negative and destructive forces that seek to undermine the place of the family farm within the food industry.

As this project continues, I look forward to the insights that members will offer as we continue to work together to make this organization the best it can be.

In Union, Joan Brady





— Alex Fletcher,
Youth President

A message from the nfu Youth

Youth Retreat- Nanoose

This year's NFU Youth Retreat took place in late March in Nanoose Bay on Vancouver Island. Fifteen National Farmers Union members, including at least one member from each of the NFU Regions, made the journey west. Participants prepared and shared presentations about some of the threats that we face such as the grain transportation crisis gripping the prairies, Bill C-18 and UPOV '91, and the risk of wide-spread contamination from GM alfalfa. We talked about the politics, practices and problems of migrant farm labour in Canada and the U.S.

We also talked about the positive and the proactive: about the history and inspiring guiding principles of the NFU; about the innovations and successes on our farms; about La Via Campesina and food sovereignty; and about the BAUTA seed initiative. For one day, we joined up with the Young Agrarians Vancouver Island Mixer – a great event and opportunity to connect with over 60 young/new farmers in the area. The ongoing collaboration between Young Agrarians and the NFU Youth is very promising as Young Agrarians has been very successful at coordinating and engaging young farmers in BC and is very supportive of NFU activities and policy work.

Several initiatives and outcomes have already resulted from the youth retreat including:

Young Agrarians Mixer in Red Deer, Alberta

In April, youth members who attended the Nanoose youth retreat organized a Young Agrarians Mixer in Red Deer, Alberta - the first such event outside BC. I travelled to Alberta for the event, which was well attended, very engaging and lots of fun (see more - page 11). I hope that this kind of NFU Youth/Young Agrarians collaboration continues to grow across the country.



NFU Youth Retreat: Nanoose Bay, BC - March 21st, 2014

left to right (kneeling): Dean Harder, MB; Ayla Fenton, ON; Virginie Lavallee-Picard, BC; Shannon Jones, NS; Lisa Lundgard, AB; (in front): Alex Fletcher, BC; (standing): Mike Kozlowski, AB; Graham Goff, SK; Blake Hall, AB; Dan Kretschmar, ON; Jennie Greven, ON; Seann Dory, BC; Dana Penrice, AB; Ted Chastko, AB; Sara Dent, BC.

Member Benefits

There is a renewed effort to offer NFU members greater direct benefits through their membership. Young farmers and members have expressed that the cost of membership can be a barrier to joining the NFU and that providing more direct benefits could not only help justify the price but could really help them afford the services and supplies they need to operate. The NFU is working on identifying key businesses and organizations whose products and services are useful to our membership. If you have suggestions for discounts or if you have connections with potential benefactors, please let us know. Either call the office at 306-652-9465 or email me at nfuyouth@nfu.ca.

Young/New Farmer Policy Platform

Youth members feel there is a clear need and opportunity to develop a national young/beginning farmers' policy platform. We are looking to the

(continued on page 6...)





Red Deer Mixer: Prairie Gold Meats and Steel Pony Farm Tour at Tamara Ranch Red Deer, Alberta, April 19th, 2014.

successful work done in the U.S. by the National Young Farmers Coalition to advance policies that support new farmers. We hope to work with other organizations who share an interest in supporting and advocating for new farmers. This initiative ties directly to existing NFU policy (Beginning Farmers Policy, #9).

NFU Branding

At the retreat we discussed the principles and opportunities of organizational branding. Participants indicated that the NFU has an “outdated” look and feel, and that there is an opportunity to be more effective by strengthening our brand. The NFU has recently launched a brand development process with youth members involved (for more information and to get involved, please see page 18). We are encouraged by this effort and hope that the broader membership will participate and support the process.

We received a lot of support to make the youth retreat possible, including financial support from the National Farmers Foundation, Local 335, Local 316, NFU-Ontario, as well as from individuals. We also received in-kind support of food and beverages from over 15 different local farmers and businesses on Vancouver Island. We are very grateful for the support and encouragement of youth in the NFU and of young farmers generally.

To get in touch with the NFU youth, email us at nfuyouth@nfu.ca.

In Union, Alex Fletcher



NFU Blog Launch

**In April the NFU launched a Blog!
(www.nfu.ca/blog)**

The recently-created Alternative Media Work Group has focused on getting this online communications platform established over the past months.

The purpose of this blog is to increase the NFU's online visibility, to reach out to potential members, and to provide members with more opportunities to connect, share and participate in wider discussions. As well, we intend this space to make relevant and important NFU issues more accessible to a wider audience. We welcome your contributions and support; please send your ideas and images to nfuyouth@nfu.ca (or by mail to NFU Head Office). We also ask for your help in sharing NFU blog posts with your networks.

Regional Reports



REGION

ONE (PEI & NB)



- by Randall Affleck (PEI)

Bill 43: An Act to Amend the Lands Protection Act:

Amendments currently before the spring sitting of the PEI Legislature (see <http://bit.ly/1ja0UfK>) add a definition of “arable land” that will be the new measurement of aggregate land holding, and changes the requirement of an annual disclosure statement to a land-holding declaration. The Bill authorizes a “succession period” of up to five years so that families dealing with succession and land holdings issues can become compliant.

Deep Water Irrigation:

At the April PEI District Convention, we passed a resolution supporting a continued moratorium on deep water wells, and then raised the issue in a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture shortly afterward.

The Provincial Agricultural Committee recommended making no changes regarding issuing new deep water irrigation permits as they continue to investigate. There are many witnesses wanting to make presentations about the matter. Some, however, are concerned that Government will change the policy after the spring sitting rises.

While permits for irrigation are required when extracting water from any natural source (i.e. natural pond, stream, river, wetland), no permit is required to build an irrigation pond outside of the 15 meter buffer zone, nor to extract water from a man-made pond.

To view several tabled documents about this issue, visit <http://bit.ly/1I2cPCG>.

The water table is quite high this spring. It was some winter! Snow everywhere.

Land Values:

Farm land values have increased considerable this past year in the potato growing areas of western Prince Edward Island and Summerside. Most purchases are being made by potato processing growers. “Good production and consistent returns over the past couple of years” are listed by FCC as the reason for the increased demand.

The 2014 potato processing contract was signed with a decline of 3% in the base price. The 2013 potato crop had an average yield reported by Statistics Canada of 281 cwt (hundredweights, or 100 pounds) per acre compared to the 277.5 cwt per acre reported in the previous year.

According to the 2011 Census of Agriculture, Prince Edward Island has 410,700 acres in crop land, of which 142,400 acres (35%) are rented or leased. The potato acreage for Kings, Queens and Prince Counties in 2011 was 12,900, 24,600 and 48,900 respectively, for a total of just over 86,500 acres.

Census data from 2006 and 2011 shows that in 2006 a total of 28,800 acres was reported as rented or leased in Kings County, while in 2011 the comparable figure was 27,700 acres.

Alternative Land Use

Services Program (ALUS):

There are 395 farmers or landholders participating in the ALUS program this year, with 5 to 10 new participants entering the program annually. The ALUS budget for 2013-14 of \$700,000 was expended.

Under ALUS, sensitive lands include high sloped land, headlands and buffer zones on which forage crops or trees should be grown. There are 387 farmers or landholders holding a total of 6,980 acres of sensitive land participating in ALUS.

(Region 1 Report, continued on page 19...)



REGION THREE (Ontario)

NFU-O



- by Karen Eatwell

Region 3 Convention/NFU-O AGM:

Region 3 held its 2014 Convention and NFU-O Annual General Meeting on March 1 in Peterborough. Members vigorously debated resolutions, and the 15 that were passed are now being worked on by Regional council and various committees.

The membership elected a new Region 3 Council and thanked those who served on the previous year's Council. We thanked John Sutherland for his contributions to the NFU-O as well.

In March, I spoke with Premier/Minister of Agriculture, Kathleen Wynne, and thanked her for the role that OMAF (Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food) played last year in assisting the NFU-O's case to regain accreditation. The Ministry provided legal arguments in support of our case and had legal representation at the court hearing last October. I also talked with her about the fact that recent changes resulting in a two-step process for membership with an Ontario general farm organization have become unduly cumbersome.

Leadership Workshop

The region held a day-long workshop in Guelph on April 12. Participants from several R3 Locals gathered to discuss the accomplishments of our organization, investigate areas of concern and look at ways to enhance member engagement. The objectives of the workshop were to build skills and capacity for increased community engagement; plan for a successful membership drive at the local level; and engage NFU leadership in empowering each other's efforts, building on accomplishments and strengths.

A report of the workshop has been compiled and Regional Council shall now make plans as to

the next steps. Many great ideas came out of the workshop; incorporating them into our organizational workplan will now be key.

Provincial Election:

Ontarians will be going to the polls on June 12 to elect our government for the next 4 years. The NFU is planning to organize to be a strong voice at upcoming Town Hall Meetings and the All-Candidate meetings organized throughout the province. Region 3 officials have put together a list of key questions for our members to ask the candidates. We need to ensure that agriculture is on the agenda. Our provincial government must support farmers who are working hard to provide healthy food for our citizens and to maintain vibrant rural communities. Materials will be available on the NFU-O website, or you can contact your local president or the NFU-O office for up-to-date materials.

Land Issues:

There has been a great deal of controversy about land use planning and landgrabbing in Ontario. Land here is precious and of high quality and high value. We have fought against Site 41 and the Melancton Quarry, and are now fighting about land use in the town of Midhurst in Simcoe County as well as in Brant County and South Oxford county, where Walker Industries proposes to turn a quarry into a dump.

We have also just learned of a new quarry application in the community of Burk's Falls in Ryerson Township, where people are banding together to save Pegg's Mountain from becoming a quarry.

Membership:

Membership in Ontario has seen a strong comeback, surpassing our projections for 2014. We look forward to continuing growth. I would like to personally thank all of our 2014 members for joining and supporting the NFU-O. It is through our members that we make change using resolutions, debate and democratic voting to shape the policies that guide our actions. As members engage in these actions, it is clear that the NFU-O has the leadership to build strong, sustainable agricultural communities within our province.

—nfu—



REGION

FIVE (Manitoba)



- by Ian Robson

Grain transportation this winter has been chaotic. Some farmers have sold wheat but many have not; some have received \$5 / bu, while others received more than \$7. Published differences of up to \$6.00 per bushel between port price and farm gate price is money taken from farmers' pockets. Grain has been trucked west from Manitoba to be loaded on rail for west coast delivery - a very inefficient process. The government's big announcement that they would force railways to carry specified volumes or face payment of daily fines was too little too late.

The NFU policy calls for the government to implement common running rights on railways, similar to what happens with highways. Rail companies could pay the fees needed to keep the track in proper service, and other carriers would be allowed on the rail lines, with preference given to Canadian companies.

Region 5 members and NFU supporters continue to be active in our campaign to defeat federal Bill C-18 and prevent implementation of UPOV '91, which would increase our seed costs and reduce the public-interest research that would benefit all Canadians.

It looks like we are seeing a price blip in cattle prices due to shortages caused by years of very low prices that have reduced the size of the North American herd and consolidated locations where beef are fed out. Smaller farmers have left the beef industry because of poor returns that depend on volume rather than the quality of production. The demand for and location of packing plants has also changed. Small local or even regional packers cannot compete with huge plants, either on the basis of price or ability to meet stringent safety regulations designed specifically to address the health and safety conditions created within huge meat processing plants.

The local food processing sector in Manitoba is having a confusing time lately with safety regulations. The need for reasonable food safety rules versus the massive food recalls from very large food processors has caused this confusion in the minds of inspectors.

It looks like Manitoba corporate potato production (despite large tax breaks and subsidy) is declining, as are prices. Potato producers carry heavy debt as they invested heavily in irrigation and tile drainage even on sandy land. Input costs are high as potato pests require the use of large amounts of pesticides. On the other hand, smaller scale market and/or organic potatoes are in much greater demand. Some have found that garden potatoes do very well without pesticides when a deep straw mulch is used to control weeds and keep potato beetles from crawling up the plant from the soil.

Because many farmers are dependent on trade, it is critical that farmer-friendly market structures like supply management in poultry and dairy be maintained. We are hearing strange talk from our Federal Government about protecting and supporting supply management while at the same time making trade deals that chip away at products protected under supply management. There is talk of arrangements to compensate producers who will be affected if the government trades market access on both sides.

Organic food is under attack for containing pesticide residues - which of course get there because of pollution by pesticide application elsewhere. The discussion instead should focus on pesticide pollution more broadly, rather than just on pesticide levels in organics.

Join the NFU - the only national general farm organization that stands up for the interests of farmers only. In the NFU, we work together to find solutions that suit farmers in all sectors across the country. —nfu—

Region 5 Convention

**Saturday, July 12th, 2014
1 PM to 5 PM - Onanole, Manitoba**

Bring your ideas and resolutions

*Convention to be followed by a
Pot Luck Barbeque Supper.*

More information to follow in the mail.



SIX (Saskatchewan)

REGION



- by Ed Sagan

We've had winter since the middle of October in the eastern part of Saskatchewan, with months of temperatures between -30 to -40 plus wind chill. Next winter, this member will be going to Cuba to golf all winter! What a thought for the future!

What a year for grain movement, with the loss of the C.W.B. Well, the grain companies are doing very well. They buy our grain for \$4.12/bushel and move it to the west coast and get \$11.70/bushel. And we get no Wheat Board final payment. The Conservatives have turned the clock back to 1900, when the grain companies profited while those who came to Canada to farm got the short end of the stick. What progress!

CP laid off 4,500 workers and sold off 11,000 rail cars and 400 locomotives in 2012. CN made similar cuts in early 2000. Farmers' rail costs have increased over 900% since 1980. In my area, a big farming corporation just purchased a large land base. Some small farmers just gave up their land and said "Let it go!" The Farm Land Security Board? They are the people to oversee who is really buying this large land base.

Last week, the grain company in Melville received a train of hopper cars – and we are on the main line between Edmonton and Winnipeg! So much for Ritz's "Marketing Freedom for Grain Farmers" an open market where every farmer has equal opportunity to go broke. Oh, by the way the spring auction catalogue is out now – it's very thick because many big, big farmers are selling out.

Please do your best to sign up two families this summer! Invite them to the Regional Convention, which will be held July 9 & 10, 2014 at St. Michael's Retreat in Lumsden, SK.

—nfu—

A word from Matt Gehl, Region 6 Board Member:

On March 8, I spoke at the AGM for Chapter 5 of the Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA) in Muenster, SK about Bill C-18 and the move to adopt UPOV '91. More than 50 people attended and all received copies of NFU materials on C-18. The people attending clearly share the NFU's concerns, and they said they would share our information at the meeting of the Tisdale Chapter the next weekend.

On March 9, I attended the Canadian Wheat Board Alliance public meeting in Raymore, SK about the grain transportation backlog, to which all political parties were invited. The federal Conservatives maintained their perfect record of absenteeism, while Ralph Goodale (federal Liberal), Malcolm Allen and Ruth Ellen Brosseau (federal NDP agricultural critic and deputy critic) and provincial NDP MLAs Trent Wotherspoon and Cathy Sproule attended. They spoke to an audience of almost 75 people, with Goodale and Allen bemoaning government's lack of action, and neither was optimistic about the then forthcoming Bill C-30. There was no shortage of frustration and vitriol expressed by attending farmers, many of who had moved little or no grain. When I brought up Bill C-18, Mr. Allen was rather direct in saying that opposition parties simply do not have the numbers to stop the government if they feel compelled to push it through. The answer was disappointing but was also a nice change to hear an honest answer that was not sugar-coated or political bafflelegab.

It was a frustrating winter for SK grain farmers. While the government does not seem to be following their modus operandi in rushing ahead with Bill C-18, Bill C-30 is a poor attempt to help farmers ship grain in a system bereft of coordination, transparency and farmer control.

—nfu—

Region 6 Convention

**Wed., July 9th & Thurs., July 10th
St. Michael's Retreat, Lumsden, SK**

More information to follow in the mail.



REGION

SEVEN (Alberta)



- by Blake Hall

I was fortunate enough to attend this year's annual NFU Youth Advisory retreat on Vancouver Island, where unlike previous years, Region 7 was able to have a four-person delegation. Attendees from our region paid out-of-pocket to join the Advisory which had country-wide representation.

The excitement over the weekend was palpable as we discussed the diverse issues facing agriculture as well as the many initiatives that NFU youth and the NFU national structures are working on. One of the rewards for our region for sending a group rather than an individual to the retreat was being able to return home with the will and proximity to carry the momentum from the meeting into our communities.

Within a month, the four youth delegates planned and hosted Alberta's first Young Agrarians (YA) "young farmer mixer." We had 70 other farmers present for a farm tour, with the vast majority eventually finding their way to a nearby hall. (see www.youngagrarians.org/)

There, NFU friend and YA coordinator Sara Dent, led activities designed to bring out the issues facing young farmers in Alberta.

Not surprisingly, the issues were neither age nor scale-specific, and as Ms. Dent pointed out, were almost identical to the issues she hears about over and over again in her region. Youth President Alex Fletcher also joined the mixer and gave a presentation about his farm and the National Farmers Union. Having Alex tie the activities of the day into the national initiatives of the NFU will lead to increased membership.

There is an appetite for what the National Farmers Union offers young farmers in this province, and based on the dialogue at the Young Agrarians mixer, I expect to see an increase in youth attendance at this year's regional convention in June.

I am not a commodity farmer and so must lean on the regional membership to gain understanding of the issues facing Alberta's grain farmers this year. There is still an unhealthy amount of last year's crop sitting in bins waiting to go to market which means that many farmers are borrowing for this year's seeding costs on top of what was borrowed last year – a precarious financial situation to be sure. Somehow the "get 'er done" attitude of the oil patch seems to trump cooperative spirit in this province, and many grain farmers in my area believe the free market lies propagated by our government despite ever higher seed and input costs put against plummeting commodity prices.

The Battle River Railway (BRR) is something of a shining star in our region (see www.battleriverrailway.ca). Against the odds of the loss of the single-desk and working with CN, the Battle River Railway is managing to move grain and other commodities while remaining commercially successful. Perhaps most important is that this short-line railway, which is cooperatively owned and has been all but abandoned by federal regulators, keeps dollars in the communities it serves and galvanizes the cooperative spirit. The farmers along the BRR are pooling their resources and investing in infrastructure including grain unloading sites along the railway.

I have been accused of being "the Grand Optimist" because I remain upbeat about the future of agriculture in this country in spite of the many challenges facing farmers and our union. I am looking forward to a great growing season – for our crops, livestock and the NFU!

—nfu—



(Message from the Editor, from page 2)

provinces. To prevent that, the federal government established the Canadian Wheat Board to support farmers' economic survival and prevent the collapse of prairie economies in 1935. The CWB was very successful until it was dismantled in 2012. Its success was due to its single desk authority as the only seller of prairie wheat and barley. In addition, price-pooling meant that producers shared the risks and rewards of price fluctuations equally, regardless of when grain actually sold. Unlike the situations both pre and post-Canadian Wheat Board, all farmers had a chance to sell at least some of their crop. Now grain companies are working with railways to solicit grain deliveries to meet government imposed targets. Unfortunately, farmers nearest to major rail lines or ports in Alberta or Manitoba are called to deliver first, while many Saskatchewan producers have not yet had the opportunity to deliver a single bushel.

Under the former Wheat Board, farmers received an initial payment based on projected price as well as volume and grade delivered, and if grain sold higher than the projected price, a final payment was received at the end of the crop year. In the few instances when prices dropped after the initial payment resulting in a loss, the government covered those losses. The system provided fair returns to the greatest number of farmers.

Now, however, in somewhat more than a century, we have come almost full circle. We have moved from corporate domination of grain grading, sales and handling through the farmer-friendly CWB which empowered farmers with its single desk authority and price pooling, right back to the rugged individualism of a system of grain sales and handling dominated by even fewer and much larger corporations. We have cycled through the unfair grain pricing and grading practices of early twentieth century grain barons to the Canadian Grain Commission, the government entity demanded by farmers to stop the robber barons and ensure that Canadian grain met the high quality standards promised to our customers. Now, we have come back to land on a greatly reduced version of the Canadian Grain Commission – a “user-pay” system that fails to recognize the value of farming and farm product as contributing a “common good” to Canada’s economy.

All of this brings me to a closing observation. There is an odd karma in the fact that the NFU came into being in 1969. It was the same year that

the Report of the Federal Task Force on Agriculture entitled “Canadian Agriculture in the Seventies” advised that it was “desirable to end farming by the individual farmer and to shift to capitalist farming.” The report further noted the following: “In sketching out this kind of model for agriculture circa 1990, we are of course rejecting the ‘Public utility’ or socialized concept of agriculture.”

Well here we are – right where the government of that day, and of all Canadian governments since, said we would be. Corporatization has risen from what we had hoped were the ashes of history, and with enormous lobbying and communications budgets, have pried their way into every government department and every legitimate governmental function. Citizens have no sway; their voices and those of civil society organizations who represent them are excluded and denied their democratic rights.

Farmers have fought this battle before and won. Although there are fewer farmers in Canada today, we have hundreds of thousands of like-minded urban and sub-urban supporters and allies who recognize the oppression of corporate control, the take-over of our governments and the denial of democratic process. The NFU has been – and will continue to be – on the ground advocating for agricultural policies that favour small and medium-sized farmers as the primary producers of food since 1969. With your support, and that of friends, families, allies and supporters across Canada, we will continue to work until we have built a better, fairer food system – one that provides safe, healthy food in sustainable, environmentally conscious ways.

—nfu—



Busy bees pollinating squash plants. (photo by Lisa Lundgard)



International Perspectives on UPOV '91

—*The case of African resistance*

UPOV '91 is on the march! National seed laws are being restructured around the world to enhance the power and profitability of corporations and investors. This attack on farmer-controlled seed systems is leading farmers' organizations around the world, including the NFU here in Canada, to challenge their own governments to defend their livelihoods and retain control over their seeds and the biodiversity necessary for viable ecosystems.

Seed law harmonization in sub-Saharan Africa

As shown in the map, Africa is the last continent that remains largely outside of UPOV. Only Kenya and South Africa have signed UPOV '78, while Morocco and Tunisia signed UPOV '91.

But for the last fifteen years, the 'leap-frogging' process of integrating Africa to the latest, rigid and stringent UPOV '91, has been unfolding. With input from the UPOV Secretariat, the United States Patent and Trademark office and powerful seed associations, the ARIPO (African Regional Intellectual Property Organization) is developing a regional legal framework that would implement plant breeders' rights in sub-Saharan Africa.

Multinational seed lobbies are actively pressuring African governments to adopt UPOV '91. Their rationale is familiar: plant variety protection would encourage R&D, improve plant varieties, increase rural incomes and ensure food security.

These claims are not supported by any empirical evidence. Instead "the adoption of UPOV '91 is likely to increase seed imports, reduce breeding activity at the national level, facilitate monopolization by foreign companies of local seed systems, and disrupt traditional farming systems" in Africa, as elsewhere according to the analysis of *Grain*, an international NGO that is monitoring the situation. *(continued on page 14...)*



Caption: World Map of UPOV members

Today, 71 States are members of UPOV (medium grey), out of which 50, mostly European, signed the latest 1991 Convention (UPOV '91), while 19 States including Canada are still bound to the 1978 convention (UPOV '78). 16 States started the process of joining UPOV (dark grey), and 24 more States are in touch with the UPOV office (light grey).

NOTE : new members can only ratify UPOV '91.



Chile beats back UPOV '91

In the face of widespread popular resistance, the Chilean government announced in March 2014 that it is withdrawing the *Plant Breeders' Rights Bill*.

Secretary General Ximena Rincón is a leader of a broadly based alliance that includes elected officials and organizations opposing the bill. She explained, "[The government has] withdrawn the Plant Growers' Law from the legislative process, to conduct analysis that takes into account what is known both nationally and internationally in this area and that protects the rights of farming communities, small- and medium-farmers and our country's seed heritage".

As a signatory to the WTO's Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), Chile government passed the *Plant Breeders' Rights Law* to join and align with UPOV '78 in 1994. However, the UPOV '91-based *Plant Breeders' Rights Bill* that was introduced in 2009 went much further in privatizing new plant varieties, extending patent rights, prohibiting traditional seed propagation and exchange, and concentrating power and profits with corporations.

Chilean opposition movements of farmers, indigenous and rural communities, environmental, human rights and indigenous organizations and activist groups dubbed the bill 'Monsanto's Law'.

ANAMURI and the Latin American Coordination of La Via Campesina lead the campaign to raise public awareness of the dangerous impacts of the Bill in rural and indigenous communities. They also lobbied Senators and other officials persistently and effectively claiming, "We won because we made a huge collective effort and massively socialized our position".

A Senate vote against the Bill has forced the government to withdraw it temporarily. However, peasant and indigenous organizations and their allies continue to call for a permanent withdrawal of the Bill, preventing it from being rewritten and reintroduced again.

1. Belinda Torres-Leclercq, "Government withdraws controversial 'Monsanto Law' from Congress", *The Santiago Times*, March 18th, 2014, <http://santiagotimes.cl/government-withdraws-controversial-monsanto-law-congress/>
2. *The Santiago Times*, "Chilean Congress debates controversial 'Monsanto Law'", Aug 29th, 2013, <http://santiagotimes.cl/chilean-congress-debates-controversial-monsanto-law/>
3. *The Santiago Times*, "Chile joins worldwide protest against Monsanto", May 24th, 2013, <http://santiagotimes.cl/chile-joins-worldwide-protest-against-monsanto/>
4. *GRAIN*, "Seed laws in Latin America: the offensive continues, so does popular resistance", 30 October 2013, <http://www.grain.org/article/entries/4808-seed-laws-in-latin-america-the-offensive-continues-so-does-popular-resistance>
5. <http://www.popularresistance.org/activists-in-chile-score-victory-over-monsanto/>

The African context and UPOV '91

While ARIPO consulted the seed industry, farmers organizations' were completely left out. Nonetheless, the Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA), which represents civil society and small farmers' organizations including La Via Campesina Africa, submitted a critique of the draft regional regulation to ARIPO's 18 member States. According to AFSA, UPOV '91 "is focused solely on promoting and protecting industrial seed breeders that develop genetically uniform seeds/plant varieties suited to mechanised large-scale agriculture." This model is particularly unsuitable for the African agricultural context, where 80 to 90% of all the seeds used by farmers come from informal seed sources and customary practices such as farm-saved, exchanged, or locally purchased seeds. These rely on an organized system of local seed production and on-farm breeding to feed local communities.

The draft regulation mentions that the farmers' privilege to save and reuse farm saved seeds from protected varieties will be subject to the payment of royalties to the breeder, and will only be applicable to certain crops determined by ARIPO.

African farmers argue that control over seeds and crops that are accessible, affordable and diverse is not a privilege, but a critical need for Africa's rural population in the face of political, economic and climatic instabilities. UPOV '91 is seen as a push to industrialize African agriculture and to tie farmers to expensive inputs sold by transnational seed corporations.

Resistance to UPOV '91

Civil society and farmers organizations in Tanzania, Ghana and throughout Francophone Africa have urged their governments to stop all UPOV'91 negotiations until farmers and other key stakeholders are consulted and heard.

(continued on page 15...)



In Ghana, strong local resistance is making it difficult to pass Ghana's proposed Plant Variety Protection Bill. The Bill was not only based on UPOV '91, but also included a clause granting plant breeders' rights an independent status making it impossible to curtail their rights with future legislation. The grassroots coalition called Food Sovereignty Ghana has been actively denouncing the governments of Ghana for simply ignoring their national process by signing the regional ARIPO Protocol that would bring UPOV '91 in Ghana saying, "*This is wholly unconstitutional, violates the rule of law and is totally outrageous.*"

African farmers challenge the definition of new varieties as those that have not been commercialized. For example, in South Africa, the Plant Breeders' Rights Act holds that "a plant variety is *new* if propagating material or harvested material has not been sold or otherwise disposed of by the breeder for the purposes of exploitation of the variety in South Africa for one year before filing the application for a plant breeder's right." In countries where the seed sector remains mostly informal, such a definition of *new* could well be

applied to all existing varieties. According to AFSA, by allowing breeders to use the genetic material of varieties without disclosing its origin, or imposing a protocol to obtain community consents to use the material in the first place, UPOV '91 is opening a dangerous door to biopiracy.

African alternatives to UPOV '91

African farmers' organizations call for innovative and sui generis (unique) plant variety protection schemes that fulfill the WTO member countries' rights and obligations in relation to intellectual property without undermining Africa's seed and food sovereignty.

AFSA demands that UPOV member states not allow ARIPO to join UPOV 1991 and that the Draft Protocol be sent back to the drawing board; that ARIPO consult with smallholders; and, especially, that it discuss appropriate seed laws for Africa, with the obligation of protecting biodiversity, farmers' rights and overall ecological productivity entrenched as a primary objective.

- AFSA April 3 2014 press release, Addis Ababa, Accra

Sources

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- 2 Food Sovereignty Ghana. "Ghana's Plant Breeders Bill Lacks Legitimacy! It Must Be Revised". Available online at <http://foodsovereigntyghana.org/ghanas-plant-breeders-bill-lacks-legitimacy-it-must-be-revised/>
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- 5 Intellectual Property Watch. Catherine Saez. "UPOV 1991 Will Adversely Impact Farmers In Tanzania, Civil Society And Farmers Say." Available online at <http://www.ip-watch.org/2013/03/25/upov-1991-will-adversely-impact-farmers-in-tanzania-civil-society-and-farmers-say/>
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Inspired by the work of La Via Campesina?

Eager to learn from and contribute to the international farmers movement?

Willing to represent the NFU and the North American region at national, regional, and international meetings and events?

The NFU's International Program Committee (IPC) is seeking to fill elected positions in Regions 3, 5 and 7. If you are interested, contact your regional coordinator! **To know more about what the position entails, please contact the IPC coordinator at wang@nfu.ca.**

Saskatchewan Citizens' Hearings on Climate Change

In November, 36 diverse experts, activists, educators, and concerned citizens met for two days of intensive discussion on climate change in a free public event involving an audience of some 200 citizens. The Hearings brought forward better understanding of the problem, the consequences of various courses of action, and thoughtful options for action and policy. Four commissioners witnessed the proceedings and contributed their insights. The Hearings were supported by several organizations, including the NFU.

The final report was published in April. While written from a Saskatchewan perspective, many issues are common to all provinces. To download the full report or individual chapters go to <http://skclimatehearings.org/the-final-report/>.



The Basque Region: *A Learning Vacation*

— by Cathy McGregor-Smith

We were looking for an interesting destination to travel to during our Off Season. We were hoping to tour farms and learn something at the same time. While searching the web, the Food Sovereignty Tours (www.foodsovereigntytours.org) from Food First Group in Oakland, California USA appeared.

Gary Smith and Cathy McGregor-Smith travelled in a group of 13 comprising food writers, activists, an urban agriculturalist, a soil scientist and other interested folk. We were the only Canadians and the only farmers. The farm visits were set up by the Basque Farmers Union (EHNE). For 8 days (March 22nd to 30th), we were immersed in the country's rich culture, history and tradition. This tour also focused on co-operatives that were working well in the Basque Region. Our host farmers were anxious to show us the services they offer their membership, such as educational, technical, economic and training resources. The Basque are passionate and readily willing to discuss their fight for political autonomy from Spain.

Several years ago the Basque government initiated an agro-tourism program assisting farmers to convert ancient multi-generational farmsteads to modern bed and breakfast operations. One of the homes we stayed in was built in 1529.

Most farms had an unheated hoop house as a seasonal extension for vegetable production that also served as a protective barrier from the annual 100 inches of rain received in the area due to proximity to the Atlantic Ocean.

We visited the Gernika Farmers' Market which was depicted in Pablo Picasso's infamous painting of the chaos and horror caused by the April 26, 1937 bombing of the market during the Spanish Civil War. We visited Mondragon Co-operative, which is one of the world's largest co-operatives. All 90,000 worker-owners must pay to be members of the Co-op. The companies within the Co-op are very diverse from dairy farm, auto parts, home



Gary Smith against the Basque countryside during a recent Food Sovereignty Tour. (photo by Cathy McGregor-Smith)

appliances to electronics. (See page 10 of the Winter 2012-13 edition of the *Union Farmer Quarterly* for the summary of a panel presentation at the 2012 National Annual Convention.)

In the spirit of co-operation, a modern cider mill and preserving building was made available to any farmers in the area to make their unique apple drinks and preserves. Artisan cheese makers were encouraged to make their products on their farms using modern equipment funded by the local government. The cheese was then sold at the farm gate or in local markets. We also visited the La Rioja wine region. Our host was an organic wine producer who was very proud of his product, but had to label it as conventional to achieve highest sales numbers.

Our group had a frank discussion period with euskal herriko nekazarien elkartasuna (EHNE) executive. EHNE is a group of affiliated farmer and labour unions in the Basque region of Spain that provides a variety of advocacy and practical services to members. For more information, visit the EHNE website at <http://www.ehne.org/index.php>. The site is in the Basque language, but either the translate function in Google Chrome or Google Translate will help with a rough translation. Paul Nicholson, a Basque farmer who was instrumental in launching La Via Campesina in 1993, participated in the conversation. He knows and has visited with some NFU members in the past. After a couple hours of vigorous debate, we finally concluded that farming issues are similar around the globe.

—nfu—



UN Discussion Attempts to Estimate the True Value of Family Farms

—by Joan Brady

I recently represented the NFU at the North American Dialogue on the United Nation's "2014 Year of Family Farming" hosted by L'Union des Producteurs Agricoles (UPA). Canadian and U.S. general farm organizations participated, but unfortunately, none from Mexico attended.

In declaring 2014 the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF), the United Nations aims to raise the profile of family farming by focusing world attention on the essential contribution this sector makes to food security, economic growth, preservation of agricultural biodiversity and the wellbeing of communities. The goal of the IYFF is to reposition family farming – its strengths, opportunities and vulnerabilities – at the centre of national agricultural, environmental and social policies, thus promoting equitable and balanced development. (FAO)

The FAO's definition of family farm is based only on labour inputs: "A family farm is a farm managed and operated by a family which provides most of the labour used on the farm". This purely labour-based economic perspective fails to recognize other characteristics of family farms that exemplify their unique natures and strengths, such as land ownership, a connection to community and the environment and the intergenerational transfer of farming knowledge and skills. These characteristics have little value for a system focused on increasing production, concentrating land ownership into the hand of absent landlords, rising corporate control and increasing international trade without considering environmental or societal fallout.

Part of the Dialogue focused on resilience – our ability to withstand crisis and adapt to ongoing change. More resilient and sustainable natural populations occur in biodiverse, healthy environments that have more interconnections with communities. Family farmers live where we work; we are embedded in our communities. We work where we live, and thus have a high stake in assuring healthy environments. The current trend toward absentee ownership of large tracts of farmland means those owners will have little if any exposure to any adverse effects of land use.

One keynote address explored various aspects of family farming in North America, presenting nothing new or surprising. There are fewer farmland acres, fewer farms and fewer farmers, and the greatest losses are among small to medium-sized farms in all three countries. Farm operators are older, and there is increased competition for land and other productive resources.

The speaker recommended that public policies must change to recognize and strengthen family-based farm operations, and to restore more localized autonomous systems by separating from global food and banking systems. Suggestions included shifting from vertically integrated systems to more horizontal or territorial models featuring local/regional marketing alternatives and more value-adding opportunities.

The speaker also advised that policies reflect the diversity of family farms and recognize the cross-cutting social, economic and environmental benefits provided by family farming. Thus, policies should include and assure the survival of the family farm for the benefit of society through, for example, linking domestic production and markets, strengthening support for collective action, empowering farmer-friendly marketing systems such as single desk selling and supply management, connecting food and public health and providing risk management for market anomalies, among others.

When visitors enter my home, they see a small sign that reads: "You are entering the habitat of an endangered species – the home of a family farmer." The International Year of Family Farming offers an opportunity to change that – to reclaim the "family farm" as legitimate and essential to human survival. This is exactly what the NFU's vision of and ongoing work for more than forty years has focused on: protecting the essential role of family farmers in providing safe, healthy, sustainable food to communities; as economic drivers for local and regional as well as national economies; and as stewards of land and natural resources into the future.

—nfu—

Joan Brady is the NFU Women's President and farms with her family in Huron County, Ontario. She also works within her community to build an equitable, sustainable and resilient food system that appreciates and empowers family farms.



Conference Board of Canada's ideas for changing Supply Management ill conceived and self-serving

— An Op Ed (opinion editorial) by Jan Slomp, NFU President, and dairy farmer from Rimbey, Alberta.

The Conference Board of Canada (CBoC) embraces the mantra that “all growth is good.” Their plan to change supply management for growth is a prescription for weakening, if not eliminating, the three pillars of supply management for dairy production in Canada – production controls, import tariffs and farmers’ cost of production pricing -- to produce more milk, lower its price and increase exports.

The CBoC claims to be an independent think tank, but in reality it is affiliated with the New York-based Conference Board, run by and for US-based multinational corporations (see <https://www.conference-board.org/>). While pretending to serve the public, it advocates for a suite of policies – including dismantling dairy supply management – that promote corporate interests at the expense of the values and aspirations of Canadian people.

Let’s do a quick review of why we have dairy supply management, and how it works. In the 1960s, dairy processors depressed farm-gate prices by employing erratic milk hauling practices. Farmers had to deliver milk at whatever price they could get or lose it all. Ontario and Quebec farmers protested and demanded government action. In 1969, a new system had the government regulate farm-gate prices based on farmers’ cost of production in return for farmers producing a constant flow of high quality milk along with a system of discipline (quotas) to prevent over-production. The system’s success led to rapid adoption in all provinces. Since then, provincial milk marketing boards have successfully managed procurement, marketing, quotas, quality control and government regulation. To ensure supply and demand are synchronized, Canada restricts dairy imports via WTO-compliant tariffs. Thus, Canada’s dairy sector produces primarily for the domestic market.

In contrast to other Canadian agricultural sectors where Agri-Stability payments are often needed to support farm incomes and overcome depressed commodity prices, Canada’s dairy supply management operates smoothly, efficiently and sustainably without government subsidies.

The CBoC now promotes increasing dairy production beyond Canadian needs in order to export. Canadian dairy producers definitely have the capacity to produce a lot more milk. But what kind of export markets could we pursue, what kind of programs would be required to obtain those markets and what net benefits would there be for various players in the system? Only a small portion of the world’s milk production crosses borders because it is a bulky perishable product. Most milk exports depend on subsidies, often obscured as indirect production supports to comply with trade agreements.

American dairy farmers receive U.S. Farm Bill-related payments that nearly double their milk cheques. European subsidies provide dairy farmers a base income, allowing them to survive on lower farm gate prices. The exception is New Zealand, a major dairy exporter with little or no subsidies. With the world’s lowest production cost (i.e., no winters) it can sell milk at the world’s lowest farm-gate prices.

Dismantling dairy supply management would be costly for Canadian taxpayers. To compete internationally, our government would have to match massive subsidies given by the USA and European countries. Dairy farmers in Canada would receive lower prices for milk, be subjected to less transparent pricing and just like other sectors, require government bail-out programs such as Agri-Stability to keep operating. Ironically, the CBoC’s dairy plan is

(continued on page 20)



Region 1 Report: *(continued from page 7)**—by Betty Brown, District 2 (NB)*

The NFU in NB annual meeting was in Gagetown on March 16, and we were pleased to have President Jan Slomp and R1 Coordinator Randall Affleck attend. The resolutions passed included opposing an increase in RAP fees proposed by the Alliance; having the Regional Coordinator elected instead of appointed; changing the French version of the name for the NFU; separating Region 1 into two regions; and sending a letter to NB Natural Resources Minister

about the province's 2014 forestry plan, along with climate change and federal electoral reform.

Planning for the Region 1 Annual Convention, which will be held in August is underway. Look for more information soon.

We are looking to hire a new executive director. Marieka Chaplin has resigned to farm full-time and home school her children. Rebeka Frazer-Chiasson will fill in until a replacement is found.

New Brunswick will have a fall election, but I have not heard any candidate talk about agriculture. The headline-makers are shale gas, the Canada East pipeline and the provincial government's forestry plan.

—nfu—

The Paul Beingessner Award for Excellence in Writing

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.
- This year's theme is: ***The Importance of Seed to Small Farms.***
- Deadline for entries is October 15, 2014.
- The prizes of \$500.00 will be awarded at the NFU Convention in November 2014.
- All or some entries may be published by the National Farmers Union.

Send entries to the National Farmers Union:

By email: nfu@nfu.ca or

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

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.



(*Conference Board of Canada, from page 18*)

modeled after the deregulated, export-oriented hog and beef sectors which have not only failed to grow, but have seen a steady decline in herd numbers. Both sectors have been punctuated by several crises over the past fifteen years, largely because farmers cannot recover their production costs.

The CBoC suggests that an export-oriented dairy system with lower farm gate prices would result in lower prices for consumers. In reality, retailers charge what the market will bear – New Zealand consumers pay among the highest prices for dairy in spite of their farmers' low cost of production.

Canadians value dairy supply management, as they enjoy a steady supply of high-quality product at reasonable prices. Supply management regulates production in each region of our vast geography,

providing milk where consumers need it. An unregulated dairy market would centralize production, processing and distribution, requiring consumers in distant areas to pay more due to transportation and storage costs.

Processors also benefit from the constant, predictable flow of milk under supply management which allows them to maximize plant and labour force utilization, unlike their US counterparts who must deal with wide and erratic fluctuations.

Dismantling dairy supply management would help companies affiliated with the CBoC, such as food processors and retailers, and other industries with their eyes on obtaining concessions at the trade deal table. Anything they gain would be a huge loss for Canadian citizens and Canadian dairy farmers.

—nfu—

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Pipelines: Lax enforcement by NEB

-by Rick Munroe, NFU Local 316

I represented NFU-O as an intervenor during last year's hearings regarding Enbridge's Line 9, the crude oil mainline for Ontario and western Quebec. I knew that environmental groups would address concerns regarding waterways. I also knew that OPLA would thoroughly cover land-owner issues.

However, I worried that "high-consequence" sites may have been built next to Line 9 and that public safety concerns at these locations might be overlooked. To discover these sites and properly understand the risks, I drove to Toronto several times, weaving back and forth across the pipeline.

What I found was shocking, so much so that I expected these locations to form the heart of the submissions by the City of Toronto (which was also an intervenor). I was equally confident that once the NEB was made aware of these locations, its tribunal would deny the Enbridge application primarily for public safety reasons: it would be reckless to expose thousands of citizens and the GTA sewer system to unprecedented volumes of volatile liquids.

However, I was wrong on all counts. The City's initial documents did not mention any of these high-consequence sites. It was only after an annotated photograph was sent to the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) that the City expressed concern. The photograph showed the open stairwell which is literally inches (24") from Line 9.

The City described this dangerous situation:

"The staff at the City of Toronto was provided with photographs prepared by Rick Munroe, also an intervenor in these proceedings.... The pipeline itself is understood to be approximately one foot above the subway structure. No as-built information is available for the pipeline. Neither the TTC, Toronto Fire Services, nor Enbridge appear to have any specific contingency plan to

manage a leak of petroleum should this occur near the TTC entrances. The top stair of the Bishop Avenue stairwell is at grade and provides no barrier to the flow of the product should there be a release. If any petroleum product was discharged either down the stairs or the escalators, or by other routes into the TTC concourse, platform or track level, there would be an enormous risk to thousands of daily passengers and TTC workers (Toronto Evidence, p. 6-7)."

What the City failed to mention is that the Health & Safety officer for the Transit Workers Union knew nothing about a pipeline next to the Finch subway terminal (until he was similarly advised by NFU).

Meanwhile, federal regulations are explicit: pipeline companies have a duty to properly inform "anyone who is exposed to the risks." It was shocking to discover this site but it was dismaying to learn that although Enbridge and the subway have co-existed for decades, no one thought to flag this situation as a concern, nor advise the workers below.

It was additionally dismaying to read, "The Enbridge Emergency Response Plan has not been previously made available to the Toronto Fire Department" (Enbridge Response to Toronto IR #2, p. 54). It seems inconceivable that Enbridge would operate in Canada's largest city for four decades, yet never bother to share its ERP with Toronto Fire (which would certainly be on the front line of a pipeline incident). Furthermore, federal regulations require companies to "consult with [fire departments, etc] in developing and updating the emergency procedures manual."

Federal regulations are clear. It is equally clear that those regulations are not being complied with. Other examples may be found in the NFU file at NEB: <http://tinyurl.com/lwn9yby> .

—nfu—



The Importance of Bees and Bee Health

A precis of the NFU's submission to the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (May 1, 2014)

- A. *Therefore be it resolved that the NFU will lobby the federal Health Canada for an immediate five-year moratorium on the use of the neonicotinoid class of pesticides in seed treatments for field crops;*

Be it further resolved that the NFU calls upon Health Canada to require completion of independent scientific studies, unencumbered by industry influence, on the sub-lethal and synergistic effects of neonicotinoids on honeybees, wild pollinators and other affected species, including the farmers who use them, with full results to be made public and available for review and comment prior to the lifting of any moratorium on the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments. (Annual National Convention, November 30, 2013)

- B. *Therefore be it resolved that the NFU-Ontario request that OMAFRA institute requirements that 80% of seed corn be available as untreated seed. (R3/NFU-O Annual Regional Convention March 2, 2014)*

NFU members have been concerned about the effect of neonicotinoids on the health of bees and other pollinators since 2012. We submitted comments responding to the Pest Management Regulatory Agency's (PMRA) proposed *Action to Protect Bees from Exposure to Neonicotinoid Pesticides* in December 2013. Concerns are so wide-spread that the National Convention (2013) passed a resolution calling for a five-year moratorium on their use (see A above). More recently, the NFU sent a letter to Health Minister, Hon. Rona Ambrose, asking her to work with the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec to begin to lay the groundwork for a full moratorium on the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments on field crops in Canada. The Region 3 Annual Convention passed a resolution calling for increased availability of untreated seed (see B above).

Bee health is a complex issue and there are factors other than exposure to neonicotinoids that may contribute to bee mortality, such as changing farming practices, loss of habitat and food sources, introduced diseases and parasites, changing weather patterns and management of bee hives. However, the PMRA itself has identified exposure to corn and soybean seed treated with neonicotinoids as a major contributor to pollinator mortalities and concluded that current practices are not sustainable.

First registered in 2001, neonicotinoid seed treatments are now used on almost 100 percent of

Ontario's corn and canola acres, 80 percent of Ontario soybean acres and 35 percent of Ontario wheat acres. A simple calculation shows that more than 50 percent of Ontario's cropland is being seeded with neonicotinoid treated seed. Much of the remaining crop land (23 percent) is in hay production, where neonicotinoids are not registered for use.

There seems little doubt of a link between acute bee poisoning in the last few years and neonicotinoid seed treatments for corn and soybean. Government specialists told the Ontario Bee Health Working Group Forum in August, 2013 that neonicotinoid seed treatments only benefit ten to thirty percent of Ontario's corn and soybean acres. Soil type, crop rotation, pest history and weed management place particular fields at risk for pests that may be controlled by neonicotinoid seed treatment. For the majority of cases assessed as lower risk, growers should consider using seed treated only with fungicide. With farm debt at an all-time high and input costs rising, 80 per cent of farmers should be happy to save themselves some money.

There are alternatives to using neonicotinoids according to the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF). Those methods, such as using Bt corn hybrids for corn rootworm and moving away from growing corn on corn, often provide better pest control than neonicotinoids.



Integrated pest management (IPM) is a good option in fields with no history of pest issues.

In whole, the NFU believes that Canada's public authorities should apply the precautionary principle to the use and regulation of neonicotinoids to prevent irreversible harm, especially given the evidence of chronic and acute poisoning causing bee mortalities. The risk management/cost-benefit approach that the PMRA and Health Canada have used until now has clearly failed. Our public authorities cannot continue to accommodate the interests of the users and sellers of the insecticides, even though PMRA has concluded that their current use is not sustainable.

In the 2014 planting season, users of neonicotinoids will be required to use 'Fluency Agent' as a lubricant in vacuum seeders although the combination will only reduce the release of neonicotinoids during seeding by 28 per cent. Incidentally, Bayer CropScience sells seed, neonicotinoid treatments and Fluency Agent. Both PMRA and seed/chemical companies are recommending that farmers also use "Best Management Practices (BMP's)" – that is, ensure proper use of the technologies according to label directions. Farmers' practices are not the problem – neonicotinoids are. There is a further problem in that untreated seed is not readily available. It is hard to imagine that it would cost more to buy untreated seed than to buy treated seed, but that is indeed the case.

Recommendations from the National Farmers Union

1. Place a five-year moratorium on the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments in all field crops;
2. If necessary, begin with a five-year moratorium on the use of neonicotinoid seed treatments on corn and soybeans in Ontario and Quebec;
3. Request that Health Canada announce the moratorium as soon as possible so that it can come into effect on January 1, 2015;
4. Allow farmers to apply for one-time use of a neonicotinoid seed treatment only if they can (1) demonstrate through a soil test or monitoring program that their crop will be threatened by pest pressure and (2) demonstrate that there are no alternative control options;

5. Require that a permit be submitted to purchase neonicotinoid seed treatments, that the seed treatments be purchased separately from seed and that the cost of the seed and the treatment be listed separately when one-time use applications are approved;
6. Monitor approved one-time use applications and publish a list of 'hot spots' where a significant number of farmers have applied to use neonicotinoid seed treatments;
7. Assess and implement integrated pest management (IPM) programs which are run in the public interest for the public good and designed to benefit farmers and both natural and agricultural ecosystems;
8. In the public interest, research and widely promote alternative and ecological farming practices which do not depend on the use of chemical pesticides. This would include options such as more diverse and longer crop rotations and increased use of cover crops;
9. Undertake publicly funded, independent field trials in the public interest to assess field crop yields, including corn, soybean, canola and wheat yields, produced with and without neonicotinoid seed treatment, with other chemical pest control agents and with non-chemical alternatives;
10. Publicly fund programs to monitor soil as well as surface and ground water sources for residual neonicotinoid levels before and after the moratorium is implemented;
11. Publicly fund programs to monitor and release bee and other pollinator population counts before and after a moratorium is implemented;
12. Initiate and support initiatives to create and maintain natural areas within agricultural areas to increase the biodiversity across the landscape and to provide habitat for bees and native pollinators;
13. Compensate beekeepers for losses caused by pesticide poisoning beginning in 2012 and continue such compensation until neonicotinoid seed treatments have been removed from the market.

The complete report is available online at <http://tinyurl.com/mnm5twf>.

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