



National Farmers Union
Union Nationale des Fermiers



union farmer

Quarterly

Fall 2015 / Vol. 21 Issue 3



Cover Photo: *"Reeling in the Wheat Harvest"* (photo by Dean Harder)

Strong Communities. Sound Policies. Sustainable Farms.

Message from the Editorial Advisory Committee

—by Ann Slater, on behalf of the Editorial Committee

If there is a theme that emerges from both the regional reports and the articles in this issue of the *Union Farmer Quarterly*, it is land – who owns it, who controls it, who works it and how do we care for it. In relation to the last point, given that the United Nations declared 2015 as the Year of Soil, it is not surprising that care of soil has been on the agenda of many farm gatherings this year, including NFU regional conventions and the upcoming NFU 46th National Convention.

Important research and advocacy around land ownership in Canada is being done by NFU members through both the NFU and the other organizations with which we work, including universities. The article titled "*Farmland for farmers, not investors*", starting on page 13, details some of the ongoing efforts across the country to keep farmland in the hands of farmers. As Ian Robson notes in the Region 5 report keeping land under the control of those who wish to farm helps maintain our responsibility to the land, our communities and the soil. The Lands Protection Act in PEI should be particularly inspiring to all of us, as it is a good reminder of the important and valuable work the NFU has and continues to undertake. We can and do make a difference! Thank you to the many members who contributed to "*Farmland for farmers, not investors*" article.

out in his portion of the Region 6 report, our release of *Losing Our Grip 2015 Update*. How corporate farmland buy-up, rising farm debt, and agribusiness financing of inputs threaten family farms this spring, generated a lot of media interest across the county, among both farm and urban media outlets.

The two reports from the International Program Committee in this issue of the *Union Farmer Quarterly* also address the need to keep control of farmland in the hands of those of us who actually work the land. But both articles also focus on the concept of agroecology and what the term means for activist farmers and our organizations. As Ayla Fenton notes in her article on pages 16 and 17, much of what we do as an organization and as farmers, whether that be using farm-saved seed, advocating for transparent markets, ensuring youth and women always have a voice and position, or moving away from purchased inputs, is already based on the pillars of agroecology. It is a term that many of us are not familiar with, but one we should start to use along with food sovereignty, to challenge current power structures in our food and agricultural systems.

Although ownership and control of land is not the focus of our 46th National Convention, care of farmland is, particularly soil. The theme of this year's convention in London, November 26 - 28 is "*Soil: Our Common Ground*". Throughout the three days of the convention, as NFU members we will no doubt debate fiercely and passionately, but will leave London knowing we stand together on common ground, committed to continuing to practice agroecology to protect our livelihoods, our food sovereignty and our soil!

—nfu—

union farmer quarterly

Official publication of the National Farmers Union
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PRINTED AT ST. PETER'S PRESS, MUENSTER, SK, AGREEMENT NO. 40063391, POSTAGE PAID AT MUENSTER, SASKATCHEWAN.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATE:

Members \$ 15.00; Non-Members \$25.00; Institutions \$35.00
(price includes monthly newsletter and quarterly magazine)

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

Despite having the best legislation in Canada, there are still worrisome developments in land use and ownership on Prince Edward Island. Legal limits on land ownership are being circumvented by the PEI potato industry. There are indications that multiple individual landowners, each owning up to the maximum of 1000 acres, are linked to the Irving family. This enhances vertical integration and strengthens their iron grip on potato farming in the Maritimes.

Nettie Wiebe, Darrin Qualman, Annette Desmarais and Andre Magnon presented their study on corporate ownership of Saskatchewan farm land at the Region 6 convention in July. Don Kossick recorded that presentation and showed the film at the Region 1 convention in Charlottetown on August 12.

In New Brunswick, blueberry farmers are facing a blunt attack on their livelihood. Their provincial government has given an out-of-province processing corporation free access to more than 50,000 acres of crown land for the production of blueberries. This is in direct competition with smallholder blueberry producers.

As other farm organizations and most commodity organizations jump in line for the photo-ops at signing ceremonies, we at the NFU know that every new trade agreement, despite the euphoria with which it is presented, is just another bill of rights for transnational capital to move product across borders. Farm gate prices are lowered everywhere and food sovereignty is eliminated. In his analysis of the industrial food system, author Brewster Kneen mentions the creation of distance between the sources of food and the eater's mouth. Distance is created not just geographically but also through processing, monopolizing of the market and labeling of farm production as a commodity. Trade agreements go hand in hand with undermining or eliminating regulations and institutions that provide equity and sustainability for farmers and eaters alike. The prime avenue for transnational capital to

advance its agenda is through trade agreements. The Canadian government, in particular, chases economic growth by pursuing trade agreements.

Negotiations and texts of trade agreements are devoid of any democratic process. The CETA facilitates the importation of another 17,000 tonne of European cheese into Canada. The effects of that are not yet felt and the sword of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) may fall anytime with similar or worse effects. The Harper government, through the Fair Elections Act, gave itself far-reaching executive powers to continue trade negotiations while parliament is dissolved ahead of the October 19th election. Among Canadian provinces, Quebec is the most solid supporter of supply management, hence the danger of no democratic base for so much negotiating power in trade agreements. The continued executive power of the Harper government in TPP negotiations, while there is no parliamentary scrutiny, creates a precarious situation for supply management sectors in Canada. No government can win an election without a minimum of support in Quebec. It is possible that at some point when the Conservatives realize that they can not win the election, they may decide to do maximum damage to supply management on their way out by committing Canada to far reaching concessions regarding supply management sectors. Stephen Harper has committed Canada to a 31-year term under the investment agreement between Canada and China in an agreement which cannot be altered. A similar commitment could be given to the TPP process.

As NFU members we all have to exercise our duty during the election campaign, by exposing dictatorial tendencies in political parties and local candidates. At the same time, we have to demand a restoration in democratic process and policies for the benefit of all in society.

In Solidarity, Jan Slomp





A message from the Women's President

—by Coral Sproule

Greetings to all! I am pleased to say that I am about to embark on a turning point in my own life as a woman and farmer. My partner and I are welcoming our first child together in December. I have to admit I am feeling a little overwhelmed with the prospect of being a mother and a full time farmer moving forward. Can we do it all?

As I wrote this report I had been reflecting on catching up with my fellow female farmers and members of the NFU. We are all so busy! Along with the daily farm chores, record keeping and organizing, we also strive to nurture ourselves, our families, and all other living things on the farm, right down to the microbiology in our soils.

I recently came across a report about people's level of 'happiness' going down after they have a child, especially if they do so later in life. I read many interesting commentaries from folks who reflected on the fact that perhaps it is not a reflection of children making us unhappy, but rather that in this modern world we are expected to continue to do everything else, while now having a new vocation as a full time parent. Parents are not rewarded or compensated for the time they spend raising the next generation. On the farm this can be even more demanding and less recognized. Not to mention that self-employed small business owners are unable to take advantage of maternity and paternity pay in this country. What else are we left to do but to continue working full steam? Sometimes this comes at the expense of our relationships, our families, our work, and also our own well-being. This can lead to both emotional and physical exhaustion, not to mention the exhaustion of precious resources. Add to this that hardly a family can afford child care, and it seems a recipe for disaster.

This is where I see that community and family can play such a valuable role in our survival on the farm. This brings me back to my thoughts recently about the solidarity I feel with all other farm families who have made it all work. What is the farm without the thought of the next generation to carry it all on? Whether this is children, farm interns, cousins, nieces, nephews or students, we hope they will sustain this food system and way of life once we carry on.

Connecting with other women farmers has been my lifeline when feelings of farming and family woes overwhelm my thoughts. Most recently, Joan Brady, former Women's President, shared a resolution on Food Sovereignty we will present to the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW). The feeling that I am working with, and connected to, a network of generations of strong women farmers has been uplifting. These generations of farm women carry the seeds of knowledge and diversity that will thrive for years to come. This solidarity helps guide me through tough times in rural life and farming when I feel overwhelmed by the relative isolation and space between us. It also gives a feeling of having a support system not only within my local community, but also, a broader web of farmers who have gone through, or have experienced, both the same challenges and the deep seeded joy that comes from nurturing our lands, our families and our communities. Reading stories of women and farming and the adversity we have all overcome is breathtaking, inspirational, and downright heartwarming.

I thank you all for doing what you do as mentors, keepers of seed, teachers, parents and nurturers.

Coral Sproule, Women's President





A message from the Youth

— Ayla Fenton, Youth Vice President

This growing season has been flying by! Sometimes, with so much going on, it feels like we are not making much progress but when I look back now I am surprised with how much we have done over the summer!

Region 1 Convention

I felt honoured to be invited to the NFU Region 1 Convention held August 11 in Milton, PEI. I had not visited the island in many years and although it was a whirlwind trip, it was wonderful to experience the warm island hospitality again and get a glimpse of maritime farm life. I learned quite a bit about the unique context that our east coast members work within. Although they certainly face challenges, the strength and deep roots of the agricultural communities really impressed me. The convention had a great turnout, despite it being a beautiful sunny day in August with lots of work to do on the farms.

I gave a presentation on youth activities, focusing on the preliminary findings from the New Farmer Coalition's survey. I received a lot of support and appreciation for the work that we are doing with this project, for which I am thankful.

New Farmer Coalition Update

Over the summer, we have been slowly sorting through the rich mine of data provided by the New Farmer Survey. There is an incredible amount of information, yielding some interesting results. Some are predictable, some surprising. We are working to put it all together in a New Farmer Report that we hope to present at our national convention in November. We are grateful to have received support from the New Farmer Foundation to help us to complete this work.

We are also working to develop an engagement strategy that will allow us to bring in more individual and organizational supporters. The coalition approach will be crucial going forward to maximize the impact of our work, so we are carefully planning how it can be optimally structured.

As always, please stay in touch by joining our Facebook group "National New Farmer Coalition" (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/821201404620999/>) or email newfarmercoaliton@gmail.com.

Member Benefits

NFU Youth President, Alex Fletcher and I have been working to develop a set of NFU member benefits. We have contacted a variety of companies, including agricultural suppliers and publications, to request discounts on products and services that can be offered to all card-holding NFU members. We have received some positive responses that we hope to announce publicly in the near future, so keep posted!

If you know of a business or service that may be willing to offer discounts, or if you have any other suggestions, please email us at nfuyouth@nfu.ca.

Food Secure Canada Election Campaign

The Food Secure Canada (FSC) election campaign "Eat, Think, Vote" is calling for the creation of a national food strategy for Canada. NFU Youth helped develop one of their four campaign planks, a call for more support for new farmers. FSC has developed a toolkit for individuals and organizations to use to host events to discuss food issues with candidates. Hosting an on-farm event with your local candidates would be a great opportunity to address agricultural issues. To learn more about hosting an event, and to sign FSC's campaign petition, check out <http://campaign.foodsecurecanada.org/>.

National Convention

National Convention is approaching quickly! This year's convention will be held in London, November 26-28. Once again, we will organize alternative, low-cost accommodation for youth members. More information will be sent out soon through the youth listserv. If you are not on this list but are interested in joining us, please contact nfuyouth@nfu.ca as soon as possible.

Thanks to all of the NFU for your support of youth work and I look forward to connecting with you all again at convention!

In Solidarity, Ayla Fenton

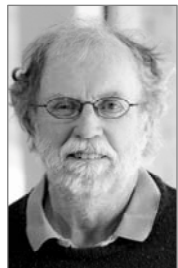


Regional Reports



Region One:

Provinces of PEI, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia



District 1 (PEI)

- by Reg Phelan, Coordinator

Region One Convention: Our regional convention was held August 11, with a good attendance on a nice sunny day. Ayla Fenton, National Youth Vice President, gave a presentation on the new farmer survey. It was great to hear about the work done and planned by youth. It is the International Year of the Soil, and we had a panel to highlight what is happening locally and internationally. See coverage from the convention in *Island Farmer* at www.peicanada.com. The same issue also carried Jan Slomp's article, "*When trade is a sacred cow*." Jan brought us up to date on trade agreements and supply management.

The regional officers for the coming year are: National Board Ted Wiggans, and Reg Phelan; Women's Advisory Marion Drummond; Youth Advisory Michelle Fye, and International Program Committee representative Eva Rehak.

Lands Protection and Water Acts: Don Kossick and Denise Kouri were in PEI for two weeks in August filming a documentary, "*Islanders and the Land*". The documentary looks at resistance to corporate food power and at alternatives. They interviewed many NFU members and others involved in protecting the land and their work around the Lands Protection Act. They plan to have this film go across Canada to be used in the fight against land grabbing and corporate control of our food system. An initial preview may be available at National convention this year.

Work continues around water issues with eight public meetings about the development of the PEI Water Act planned in October and November. —nfu—



District 2 (New Brunswick)

- by Ted Wiggans, Board Member

Local Food Security Act: Although the New Brunswick government rejected Bill 11, a "Local Food Security Act", sponsored by David Coon, it has committed to the development of a local food strategy. A local food initiative, not enshrined in statute is problematic in that it is susceptible to termination or alteration on governmental whim.

On June 24, I met with the Director of Innovation and Market Development, Department of Agriculture, Aquaculture and Fisheries (DAAF). The Executive Director of the NFU-NB followed up with a letter detailing how a local food security program could have a major impact upon NB's economy. It discussed food labeling, research and data collection, agri-tourism and food education.

NFU-NB Initiatives: The NFU-NB is developing a 52-week "Buy Local" campaign. We are excited by its potential to replace imported products with local products and to spur the growth of local production. Perhaps its greatest benefit is the collaboration between the general public and farmers.

We are continuing to develop the strategic plan. NFU-NB members can expect to receive a survey in the near future which will help us to determine the path forward. This is your opportunity to determine how we can best support NB farmers.

The issue of access to Crown land by NB blueberry farmers has not been addressed as of this date by the provincial government. This has been an issue for a number of years and we have been informed that a resolution is in sight. We are looking forward to analyzing this initiative in the next *Union Farmer Quarterly*.

Although the NFU has been a bi-lingual organization from its birth, it is a work in progress. NFU-NB members who participated in the brand development process emphasized the importance of a bi-lingual face, so that farmers of both language groups can feel at home. The Brand Standards Guide, which has been recently approved, defines how the bi-lingual logo is to be used. We hope that the Brand Standards Guide is a step forward to better service for both language groups. —nfu—



NFU-O/Region Three:



Province of Ontario

- by Karen Eatwell, Coordinator

On June 26th, Sarah Bakker, National Farmers Union- Ontario General Manager, and myself presented before the Ontario Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs Appeal Tribunal as part of the re-accreditation process. All three farm organizations presented within a two-day period. On July 10, the tribunal informed us that based on the evidence filed and our oral submission, the NFU-O met all the prescribed criteria for re-accreditation as a farm organization. This decision is in effect for a period of three years commencing December 19, 2015.

As the summer slowly comes to an end and autumn approaches so does a federal election. Many of us are talking and having conversations to ensure issues effecting agriculture and rural communities are heard. It is important that we take the time to engage in the process and learn the policies and platforms of the various parties. Town hall meetings will be scheduled in various areas around the province with discussions of key issues. I encourage members of the NFU to attend and ask questions of those running for election about how they will support agriculture if elected.

I look forward to November this year as the National Convention is being held so close to my home for me. I live just minutes north of London and look forward to seeing the many members of our organization come together once again.

—nfu—

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The NFU Youth will once again be holding a Silent Auction at National Convention

(see back page for more details)

and are seeking donations. Donated items may include farm products, books, artwork, and more.

All funds raised will help support the work and activities of NFU Youth. If you have an item to donate,

please bring it with you to convention.

Whether or not you have an item to donate, consider doing some Christmas shopping at the NFU Youth auction.

For more information, contact
nfuyouth@nfu.ca



Region Five:



Province of Manitoba

- by Ian Robson, Coordinator

Region 5 Convention

In July, thirty passionate farmers and NFU members attended the Region 5 Convention at Portage La Prairie. The theme was 'Connecting our Farms'. NFU President Jan Slomp set the tone describing how farmers settled these Canadian prairies as an escape from feudal conditions, captive production and debts in their home countries. In this new country, farmers could own land and succeed best by cooperative efforts. They tried to prevent the exploitative situation that many had escaped. Settlers built on local skills and local trades so that all could try to make a living. Robust farmer cooperatives were established and those principals followed through to public policy, like the Canada Grain Commission (CGC) and the Canada Seeds Act, which ensured quality in seed and quality for the market.

You do not know what you have until it is gone. Recently the CWB was gifted away, the CGC is under attack and the Canada Seeds Act is encumbered by plant breeders rights and patents. The elevators now capture too much of the value of our grain and are failing to deliver quality to the customer. Slomp called upon farmers to join the NFU and to have serious discussions on the kind of future that Canada's farmers want.

Annette Desmarais, Canada Research Chair in Human Rights, Social Justice and Food Sovereignty, then spoke about land ownership and why it is important to keep the land owned by those who wish to farm, rather than to use land as an investment to capture capital gain. Absentee ownership changes the relationship to land, losing the responsibility to people and to soil.

Retired soil researcher, Gary Martins spoke about United Nations Year of the Soil. All life depends on the soil and humans are still learning how to work with it. Soil organic matter has been depleted from 13 percent to 23 percent before settlement, to about 3.5 percent now, a troubling trend. With better soil

management organic matter can be recovered at a rate of one percent per ten years by using rotations, perennial crops, inter-cropping and cover crops to keep the soil life active and releasing nutrients to feed our crops. There are perennial forages, perennial wheat and sunflowers in development which would reduce the need for the chemical use which inhibits soil life. It takes the soil to make the beauty of a garden or the landscape.

The meeting then discussed trade agreements and what these really mean. There is little evidence that farmers benefit from the trickle down investment rules of trade deals. The benefits, if any, are captured by the processors, the handlers and the investment capitalists. One quickly realizes that beef export orders cannot currently be filled since the beef herd has been reduced by low prices, floods and drought. In the hog industry, vertical integration has removed farmers from the picture, but oddly, low hog prices have meant investment hog barns which are supported by taxpayers. Supply management has been shielded from trade deals but is now at risk from trade deal creep, which allows more tonnes of lower tariff product into Canada, thus reducing the need for local production. Trade will continue to happen but the need is for fair trade and for respect for local food and national needs.

The jewel session of the convention was a panel discussion on "*Supply Management, Connecting our Farms*", organized and chaired by Dean Harder. Panelists included: Bill Uruski, Manitoba (MB) Turkey Producers; Jake Wiebe, MB Chicken Producers and Lydia Carpenter, Sharing the Table MB, a small scale farmer organization. The Manitoba Milk Producers sent an observer who added excellent comments. Mr. Wiebe explained his farm history from pre-supply management days of instability to the present operation of the chicken board, off-quota exemptions and the new entrants policy. Mr. Uruski described the operation of the turkey board, policy history and current threats to supply management. Lydia Carpenter keeps local food production skills alive and creates a food business from the living soil for local food conscious consumers. She described how supply management has not flexed enough to accommodate local food businesses. The diverse panel allowed frank exchange about supply management, processor service, market support and where things could be improved.

(continued on page 9...)



The wide ranging discussion covered the history, the challenges and the need for a made-in-Canada policy. Nothing in agricultural is absolute but the goal is to strive for the best that can be. We heard that supply management allows Canadian farmers to supply quality perishable products without being undercut by imports from countries with lower standards and lower costs of production and without wasted production. Canadian consumers pay the direct value of the product, without need for subsidies. Supply management does make room for off-quota, unique production for the direct market but there is controversy over what small scale is and what unique production is. This is complicated by a lack of access to processors, who have become consolidated and tied to industry. Reliable processor service for local food markets is needed.

Presentations from all panelists showed true commitment to quality production and to policy which best covers local needs. There is a need for specialized industrial scale production to make room for the smaller scale farmers who use natural production methods and supply the local market.

So far, Canada's agriculture minister has supported supply management, but during recent Trans Pacific Partnership negotiations, the trade minister proposed opening Canada's supply managed sectors to more imports. This mixed message is hard to follow and gives the upper hand to investment rather than to quality, local food, healthy soils and communities.



Photo: NFU Region 5 Coordinator Ian Robson.
(photo by Dean Harder)

Beverly Stow reported on a June consultation with the Manitoba Minister of Agriculture Food and Rural Development. At the consultation a representative from the Manitoba Food Processors Association reported that ten years ago the Canadian trade balance in processed food was a positive \$8 billion but presently this trade balance is negative \$7 billion. How can this be? What Federal and Provincial policies are needed to help keep our local food processors in business? The loss of processors like Heinz and Campbell Soup can be explained by bad trade deals which let foreigners supply our food needs, thereby, putting farmers out of business. Mrs. Stow recommended that the minister be more supportive of supply management and of local food systems.

Other news from Region 5

Some parts of Manitoba had an early shortage of rainfall but generally farming weather has been good. Excessive forest fire smoke and wet conditions are a challenge for farmers.

The Manitoba NFU had the opportunity to present ideas for better risk management and farm support programs to the Manitoba Task Force on Business Risk Management and Climate Change. Extreme weather is becoming more common and over the years programs like crop insurance, AgriStability and AgriRecovery are showing their inadequacies. One lost business risk management tool was the CWB which helped farmers maximize their grain value. For example, in one week recently the price of canola declined by sixty cents per bushel as investment traders looked at crop production reports. With pricing change happening as quick as that, farmers need more support systems rather than less. Programs supporting mixed farming would help rebuild resilience, build the soil and build communities. Tree planting programs would help lower risk. In Manitoba, water management is a big concern and needs to be addressed.

Region 5 is working to host several meetings about seed policy and how UPOV '91 was handled in the EU, what it meant for those farmers and what opportunities Canada has to avoid costly seeds and the mistake of UPOV '91.

Please contact the NFU with your comments and ideas. Each Manitoba local is able to send a delegate to the National Convention. Make your arrangements to attend this important NFU event, November 26-28 in London.

—nfu—





Region Six:

Province of Saskatchewan

- by Ed Sagan, Coordinator

Our Regional Convention held in July at Lumsden was a success. Approximately seventy were in attendance from a variety of organizations. The first night featured a presentation on the 2015 update of "Losing Our Grip". The outstanding speakers were Darrin Qualman, Nettie Wiebe and Andre Magnan. We have to thank Cathy Holtslander and Patty Englund for helping put this presentation together. Other speakers at the convention included Bill Gehl and Glen Tait from the Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission. NFU President, Jan Slomp gave us a national update on the NFU and discussed the membership development project that is in the works. Rachelle Ternier gave a presentation on behalf of the NFU youth.

We need the Farmland Security Act to protect us from those who live just beyond our border and see our land as nothing more than a commodity to be bought and sold. In the eastern part of Saskatchewan twenty of the biggest farmers are selling out this year. The two largest have land holdings in excess of 10,000 acres.

Thanks to the federal and provincial governments' policy on farming without the single desk CWB, farm debt is going up. In 1971 farm debt was \$5 billion and in 2014 farm debt totaled almost \$80 billion. So much for farming into the future. In the last three years farm debt increased 22%. The destruction of the single desk Canadian Wheat Board in 2012 has severely damaged the prairie grain economy and compromised both prices and equitable delivery opportunities.

The threat of corporate control over seed is more serious as a result of Canada adopting a UPOV'91-compliant Plant Breeders' Rights regime. Changes to seed regulations in Canada and cutbacks to public plant breeders are related. International trade deals, such as CETA, TPP and FIPPA, entrench these threats. Investor protection clauses allow a corporation to sue our government if their ability to profit is diminished by changes in government regulations.

A dry spring and about sixteen inches of rain this summer has resulted in excellent crops in northeast Saskatchewan. Newly elected NFU Region 6 board members are Edward Sagan, Edward Pederson and John Gordon. Our Women's Advisory representative is Marcella Pederson and Youth Advisory representative is Rachelle Ternier. The Region 6 International Program Committee representative will again be Dixie Green.

Please try to sign up two new members in your area.

—nfu—



- by Matt Gehl, Board Member

Since our last convention it has been a rather mixed bag for the NFU. As has been the case for the last number of years we have been fighting the good, albeit losing, fight for the vision we share for Canadian agriculture. The remnants of the CWB are gone, the Indian Head tree nursery is in shambles, the status of the prairie pastures are still in limbo, UPOV '91 has come into effect, grain companies are still pilfering billions from the pockets of prairie farmers and somehow the weather listened when farmers said over the winter that a little bit of drought would not be too bad for the 2015 season and took it a little too literally.

And yet there is a changing in the wind. I have noticed that the NFU is getting more exposure in the Western Producer and Manitoba Cooperator than the past couple years. Sure, not all of it is good, but at least the NFU viewpoint is being presented rather than simply ignored. Some of the articles may be missing the mark slightly but we should take pride in the fact that the Western Producer says we have an almost clairvoyant ability to predict the outcome of agriculture policy changes. Nobody likes to hear it, but I think we all deserve to say "We told you so".

Some of the work that the NFU has done has been very well received - something I can attest to personally. The *Losing Our Grip 2015* report was not only a fantastic piece of research, but it proved to me that there is still a vestige of care amongst urbanites about the life of Canadian farmers. As one of the media contacts for the NFU on this release I was

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bombarded with interview requests in the days following. Myself and NFU Youth President, Alex Fletcher, did interviews with CBC afternoon radio programs from Halifax to Victoria, fourteen different markets in total. I was also contacted by all the regular agriculture media outlets in Saskatchewan. To me this is proof that the issue of land ownership is one that can be used to connect better with the millions of Canadians who have almost no care about how their votes affect life on the farm.

I was also pleasantly surprised by the outpouring of support (vocal, not financial) that came my way while working a table at the anti-Energy East pipeline events in Regina and Moose Jaw. We should all take some inspiration from the victory of Nebraska farmers over the construction of the Keystone XL pipeline.

The political winds are also changing in this country. I know we felt that on our farm before the Alberta election. Things just felt different, as if finally the majority of Canadians were waking from the collective coma of the conscience that allowed

Stephen Harper to be given a majority government. So while we in the progressive farm movement have been taking it on the chin for years, now is not the time to give up.

I would like to pass along some thank yous. To the Region 6 members who corralled me into a board position a few years ago. To the Board of Directors of the NFU for providing me with an immeasurable experience during my years on the board. Not enough thanks can be given to the tireless work of the women in the national office. Joan, Diane, Cathy, Carla and now Patty are the day-to-day operation of the NFU, and none of the board members or farmers we serve would be as well off without them. Finally, I must thank my parents. They provided me with the opportunity to even be in the position to be involved with the NFU and were responsible for raising me with a set of values that made me a perfect fit for the NFU.

—nfu—

Region Seven:



Province of Alberta

- by Doug Scott, Coordinator

Greetings from Region Seven! I hope this finds you all well and looking

forward to harvest. This year has been a challenging one for growers in our area. We have seen weather extremes. Drought in some areas and excessive rainfall and storms in others.

Overall the crops appear to be below average at best. Over twenty counties in the province have declared themselves disaster areas. Particularly hard hit have been our hay producers as first cut yields are a quarter of normal and second cuts are rare. Good quality hay is selling for as much as ten cents a pound. All straw from cereal crops will likely be baled for feed and bedding. At our recent horseshow the main talk among participants was the cost of hay and where it could be found. In mid-August, harvesting of peas and early barley crops

has begun and some canola crops are being swathed. Different crop management practices are very apparent this year. Our total rainfall is about six inches and I am surprised at how well crops can grow with so little moisture. Average rainfall would be more than ten inches.

We had a couple of interesting meetings in late August. The first was an orientation session for a group of MLAs on August 28. The session was hosted by the NDP rural caucus and provided an opportunity for us to highlight some of the challenges facing farmers. Our second meeting was with Oneil Carlier, our new agriculture minister. This was a unique opportunity for us to bring our concerns to the attention of the minister. This is the first time in my memory that the NFU has been invited to a one-on-one session with an Alberta agriculture minister. We used our limited time wisely. We are concerned that the old guard are doing their best, as has already been the case, to both undermine and co-opt the minister. We must all be cognizant of how deep the conservative roots run in this province. It appears that Premier Notley's approach is to proceed with caution.

Take care during the harvest season and I hope to see some of you at our annual convention in London.

—nfu—



UPDATE: from the Strategic Planning Committee

—by Coral Sproule, NFU Women's President

A Strategic Planning Committee was formed nearly twelve months ago. It has members from across the country who are dedicating many hours to working on the committee's goals. The committee's purpose and intent, as approved by the NFU Board, is to *develop plans, policies and procedures for recommendation to the Board regarding strategies to grow the NFU's membership numbers, promote member retention and membership knowledge and grow the NFU's financial means and organizational capacity.*

As you might imagine, this has been a huge task and requires regular meetings. This keeps us on track and abreast of not only our short term needs but also, a deeper need for longer term development of member recruitment and member education and training. We hope to deepen the culture of participatory processes within the National Farmers Union.

Funding for the work of the committee has come through an Inter Pares grant titled ***Sharing Experience, Sharing Leadership: Growing the National Farmers Union.*** Phase one of the funding was directed towards Brand Development: identifying our values and refreshing our collective identity. With the second phase of funding, we are striving to strengthen the NFU by improving our membership recruitment and retention and developing our grassroots members' capacity.

We intend to strengthen and develop new NFU structures and protocols to support relationship-building, new member orientation, creation and sharing of knowledge, communications strategies and tools and leadership training. The committee decided our efforts were best focused on various streams of member development at all levels of the organization. This includes the development of educational tools, communications strategies, new

member orientation, more consistent support for regional officials and advisory committee members and increasing access to information for both members and non-members. We hope to enable building of membership in areas of the country where we see potential for more engagement and lack of, or dwindling, membership numbers.

Another aspect which we see as essential for the sustainability of this project is to increase our fundraising capabilities. To meet the goals of our strategic planning processes we filled the following three contract positions this summer: Donor Campaign Facilitator; Membership Development Trainer and Educational Resources Developer.

At our national convention in London, November 26-28, we will bring together many of the various tools and resources we have been developing over the past six months. We will hold a train-the-trainer

workshop to pass along some of what we have been working on, and gain feedback from members who have volunteered to take on a leadership role in their regions. We see convention as a great opportunity to meet face-to-face with farmers from across the country to exchange ideas and work collaboratively. We hope this will serve as a launching point to enable further development of training, gatherings and kitchen

table meetings across all regions and levels of the National Farmers Union, especially the grassroots where we strive to be. Through this work we hope to become a more robust organization and increase our abilities to lead Canadians in the global movement for democratic control of our food system.

For more information contact our National Office at 306-652-9465 or nfu@nfu.ca.

—nfu—

The committee's purpose and intent...is to develop plans, policies and procedures... regarding strategies to grow the NFU's membership numbers, promote member retention and membership knowledge and grow the NFU's financial means and organizational capacity.



Farmland for farmers, not investors

Who will own Canada's farmland? The farm families who work it? Or investors and corporations? And if it is increasingly the latter, what effects will this erosion of equity and control have on the viability of our farms? Around the world and across Canada, farmland is seen more and more as an investment opportunity and strategic asset. This phenomenon goes by several names: land grabbing, corporate ownership, and investor buy-up. In some places, such as Saskatchewan, investor purchases are relatively new—a phenomenon of the past dozen years, partly caused by a real estate boom and relaxed ownership restrictions. In places such as Prince Edward Island, the struggle to maintain farmer control and limit concentration and corporate ownership is decades, even centuries, old. Today, in every province, corporations and investors are buying farmland. And across the country, NFU members, officials and staff, cooperating organizations and researchers are working to document and counter this trend. The NFU's work on this issue is ongoing, ambitious, and often, as in PEI and elsewhere, very effective. What follows is a look at some of that work. We begin, however, by considering our land ownership policy, legislative options and trade-offs.

For farmers, land ownership is not just a balance-sheet issue—assets vs. liabilities. Ownership can give a farm family control and security—the ability to endure price or production shortfalls, chart a new direction for its farm, or pursue goals beyond short-term profit. Thus, the structure of land ownership—e.g. dispersed farmer ownership vs. concentrated investor ownership—helps shape the long-term structure of agriculture as a whole. For these reasons, land ownership legislation is vitally important, shaping how land is viewed and used, and *who* gets to own and use it. Land ownership legislation facilitates, even partly determines, different models of agriculture.

Central to the land ownership debate is the concept of investment. Most people have a vague sense that investment is a good thing. At the end of 2002, Saskatchewan replaced its farmland ownership law that restricted ownership to provincial residents and corporations with new legislation that expanded ownership eligibility to all Canadian residents and corporations. When it did so, its Agriculture Minister said that the move showed that "Saskatchewan is

open to outside investment." One goal of less-restrictive legislation is to "maximize investment" in farmland. There are several problems with this vaguely-positive idea of investment. First, such talk omits the fact that, for farmland, every investment comes with a divestment. When a farm family sells its land to an investment company, that company may be investing, but the family is divesting. Maximizing outside investment can mean maximizing farm family divestment. Second, in financial terms, "investment" has two main meanings. The first is to build something new: a new factory on a formerly empty field. The second meaning is more like a bet: an investment in a hedge fund or derivative. When it comes to farmland, investors are not building so much as betting. Governments and investment companies encourage an intellectual sleight-of-hand, implying that the farmland investment they seek to maximize is the more positive, first kind, when really it can only be the second.

The third problem with "investment" is the most important. As often used, "investment" encompasses only financial flows. Money, however, is only one kind of investment. Farm families understand investment in much broader terms: to endeavour over the long term to contribute time, labour, stewardship, skills, and resources into a place with the purpose of achieving an improvement or good. Farm families understand that investments of collective energies, hope, ingenuity, trust, and community-building, as well as labour and money, can contribute to future security, wellbeing, political goals, and increased quality of life. Social investment in land and farms can contribute to the creation of beautiful landscapes, thriving communities, even to the development of a nation and to the creation of programs such as Medicare. But if we enact farmland ownership legislation that maximizes narrow financial investment, we risk impeding or diminishing social investment. Farmland ownership legislation can move us in two different directions: such legislation can increase the size of the land-buyer pool and, hence, the rate of increase in land prices, for the benefit of exiting farmers and investors; or legislation can prioritize social investment in food production, family farm continuity, and community building. Inflows of external financial capital often create costs in terms of lost social capital. Investor profits are counted, community losses are not.

(continued on page 14...)



Across Canada, the NFU is working to enact and maintain land ownership legislation that supports family farm ownership, prioritizes social investment, and minimizes the power of corporations and investors to extract profits from farmland. Earlier this year, NFU Director of Research Cathy Holtslander thoroughly revised and updated an NFU report on land ownership, *Losing our Grip*. General Manager Patty Englund has been working with members and officials to prioritize the land ownership issue and coordinate work.

In Saskatchewan, a research group headed by Annette Desmarais (Canada Research Chair in Human Rights, Social Justice, and Food Sovereignty at the University of Manitoba) that includes former NFU President Nettie Wiebe (University of Saskatchewan), former NFU Director of Research Darrin Qualman, and André Magnan (University of Regina) has been examining the effects of removing restrictions on land ownership in that province. Their forthcoming findings show that, in just over a decade, investors, investment companies, pension funds, and farmer-investor hybrids (hereafter referred to collectively as “investors”) have bought up 837,000 acres of farmland.

From 1974 to the end of 2002, Saskatchewan restricted farmland ownership to provincial residents and companies wholly owned by those residents. In 2003, the province relaxed restrictions to allow all Canadian residents and wholly owned corporations to own land. In a two-year project, with the help of the NFU and its members, Desmarais, Wiebe, Magnan, and Qualman have been analyzing detailed data on who owns Saskatchewan farmland. Briefly, their findings show that in 2002, when Saskatchewan restricted ownership to provincial residents, investors owned 52,000 acres of farmland. By 2014, just over a decade after the province relaxed restrictions, investors owned 837,000 acres—a 16-fold increase. One investor, Robert Andjelic, now owns more than 160,000 acres of Saskatchewan farmland. HCI Ventures, an Alberta-based investment vehicle, also owns more than 100,000 acres, as does the Canada Pension Plan. This research shows that changes in legislation influences who owns farmland, and how much. The Saskatchewan Government is considering changes to farmland ownership laws and recently conducted an online consultation. In July, the NFU submitted a brief to Saskatchewan Government on land ownership.

The work by Desmarais and her team is ongoing and may soon expand to other provinces and other aspects of land ownership. Desmarais and Magnan are seeking funding to:

- conduct research on land ownership in Alberta and Manitoba;
- investigate the social impact and environmental implications of changing farmland ownership patterns; and
- examine models of land tenure that could support food sovereignty.

In Ontario, land ownership legislation has even fewer restrictions than in Saskatchewan. Ontario allows anyone in the world, or any company, to own its farmland. This is an extreme version of land-price and investment maximization—allocating farmland solely according to ability to pay and putting land-buying farm families into competition with quarry promoters and property developers funded by offshore investors, and other huge pools of speculative money.

Two key land grab issues in Ontario involving foreign investors in farmland are the acquisition of gravel land by The Highland Companies for a proposed quarry in Dufferin County, north of Toronto and investments by Walton Group outside of protected greenbelts.

According to Joyce Nelson, writing for the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives:

“In 2006, the Highland Companies . . . started buying up properties in the Melancthon area, eventually accumulating 8,500 acres of farmland—purportedly for growing potatoes. But, after the company started drilling in the area, local people became suspicious and began organizing. Highland Companies calls itself an ‘investment vehicle for a group of private investors based in Canada and the United States.’ One of those investors is the Baupost Group, which manages \$23 billion in assets In 2009, Highland revealed plans for the mega-quarry. . . . In March 2011, Highland filed its application . . . to excavate 2,400 acres of prime agricultural land. . . . When completed, the mega-quarry would be the second largest quarry in North America.

(www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/monitor/beware-private-water-speculators)

(continued on page 15...)



Area residents organized and stopped the quarry. In 2012, Highland withdrew its application to dig and, a year later, sold its land to Bonnefield Financial, a farmland investment firm. Though the quarry has been stopped, Bonnefield or some other entity can apply anytime for permission to develop and dig. For now, however, those who care about food and farmland have stopped those who care only about profit.

Ella Haley (Athabasca University) was been researching the landgrab in Ontario. She notes that Walton Group, worth \$4.8 billion, has been systematically buying farmland just outside of the Toronto and Ottawa greenbelts—positioning itself to profit from “leapfrog development.” Calgary-based Walton has offshore investors from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Germany, as well as from Canada. As of 2011, Walton owned approximately 13,000 acres in Ontario (and additional land in Alberta). As farmland is purchased for development, the farming community loses its farmers and neighbours. Langford, a small farming community abutting Toronto’s Greenbelt, is now an “agrismum”—Walton Group owns much of the land and many of the former farm buildings have been torn down. Haley proposes land trusts and conservation easements as tools to protect farmland.

In response to farmland ownership incursions by Walton, Highland, Bonnefield, and others, Ontario NFU members and others are pushing for a moratorium on investments by pension funds and offshore investors, and challenging legislation that permits non-farming development on good farmland. The Ontario government is reviewing the Ontario Greenbelt and there are calls for all of southern Ontario to be designated a greenbelt.

In Prince Edward Island, a struggle continues to maintain caps on the amount of land any person or company can own. Many of those engaged in this work understand that it is an extension of a struggle that goes back centuries. More than 250 years ago, PEI was set up under a lord-of-the-land feudal system, with tenant farmers having few rights. Many of the people who settled PEI had lived with a similar system in Ireland, Scotland, and England. Such systems gave the lords power over land, living conditions, and taxes. However, a militant resistance arose that fought back and wrestled power from the lords.

In more recent years, there are many parallels. The 1969 Federal Task Force on Agriculture report,

Canadian Agriculture in the Seventies, called for elimination of two thirds of the farmers in Canada to create an industrial food system. In PEI, a parallel initiative was called the “development plan,” with experts brought in “from away” to implement it. PEI was to be an example of modernization, and integration into the vertically integrated food system. For this to happen, farms would have to be made bigger, and fewer.

From its start in 1969, the National Farmers Union was the main group to challenge what was happening in Prince Edward Island. Tractor demonstrations, ferry shutdowns, and other actions brought together many people to fight for the land and farm families. The NFU emerged as the official opposition on the Island. One result was the 1982 passage of PEI’s *Lands Protection Act*. The *Act* restricts ownership to PEI residents and limits corporations to owning no more than 3,000 farmable acres and individuals to 1,000 acres. The *Act* was passed, and has been retained, only as a result of vigorous and ongoing work by NFU members and other farmers and Islanders. PEI’s *Act* is the strictest land ownership law in Canada. In 2013 an important victory was won to retain the cap on individual ownership at 1000 acres.

Long-time NFU supporters and collaborators Don Kossick and Denise Kouri were in Prince Edward Island in August to work with members to create a video documentary, *Islanders and the Land*, to chronicle the story of historic and present-day struggles to shape land ownership policies on the Island. Kossick and Kouri also filmed in Saskatchewan. In coming months, their film will be taken across Canada, as part of the fight against land grabbing and corporate control of the food system.

The NFU is working on farmland ownership issues across the country. Our national structure allows knowledge and victories gained in one region to inform efforts in another. And our network of volunteers, officials, cooperating organizations, and supporting researchers and activists allows us to work at many levels, in many ways. We can collaborate to produce detailed statistical and academic research, and we can connect that information with grassroots struggles in various provinces and communities. The structure and diversity of the NFU is a great strength in working on this and similar issues.

—nfu—



Agroecology for international sovereignty:

Common pillars

—by Ayla Fenton, NFU Youth Vice President

"Prepare to hit the fast forward button in your political understanding of society and your own life. You will be surrounded by people from all over the world, so I hope you're ready for long days, lots of meaningful conversations and collective work."

This was the advice I received from Blain, a youth leader within La Via Campesina (LVC) North America, a few days before we were both set to depart for the International Forum on Agroecology in Mali. I thought it sounded like a slight exaggeration, but the event certainly lived up to his description.

I have to admit that I did not know much about agroecology before this experience. I assumed, like many people do, that the term referred primarily to a set of production practices, synonymous with "organic" or "ecological" agriculture. Wrong again.

I learned in Mali that agroecology is much more than a set of technologies. It is a political and social system, a way of life, a form of resistance against capitalism and neoliberalism, and quite simply the only means of achieving food sovereignty. The International Forum for Agroecology was held February 24-27, 2015 at the Nyéléni Center in Sélingué, Mali. Hundreds of diverse food producers and LVC delegates from around the world attended. There were only a handful from North America, including Blain and myself representing the youth of the region.

Back in 2007, a similar group gathered at Nyéléni, Mali for the Via Campesina Forum for Food Sovereignty. The declaration drafted there is now used as the authoritative definition for food sovereignty by organizations and institutions worldwide. The goal of this year's forum was to create a similar declaration for agroecology. Much has changed in the past eight years. LVC spent years lobbying governments and institutions to accept their definition of food sovereignty. This time around, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations sent funding and representatives to Mali and appeared to recognize LVC as the global authority on these issues.

A declaration and clear definition of agroecology is needed to educate LVC members, such as myself, about what agroecology actually means because there is still a lot of confusion. There is also a sense of urgency for fear that the term could be co-opted if we do not act quickly to explain and own it ourselves. Over the years, corporations have adopted terms like "organic" and "food security" in efforts to improve their public images and to increase profits, in ways that are completely at odds with the original spirit of the words. To prevent this from happening again, we need to make clear that agroecology does not exist while current power structures remain unchallenged.

Throughout four days of intensive meetings at the forum, we heard perspectives from peasants, farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous people, pastoralists and urban people from around the world. I was particularly struck by the way the Malian participants spoke about the need for agroecology in their country. They have seen drastic and explicit degradation of their land, water and food supply as the countryside has shifted to more industrial production. Aggressive desertification has destroyed much of the already limited arable land, and the shift to export crops has left more communities malnourished. Many Malians expressed the same idea to me – that previous generations knew how to produce good food in this harsh, arid climate using traditional methods, and had succeeded in feeding their families and communities. Now, much of that knowledge has been lost. Some even claimed that the extreme land degradation and food insecurity in northern Mali has played a large role in the violence and political conflict that has plagued the region in recent years. For these people, reverting to an agroecological approach is seen as an absolute necessity.

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I found this to be in stark contrast to the way that agroecology and ecological food production is viewed in North America. A dominant narrative is that it is a luxury, something for hippies and rich people. It is easy to think that we do not need agroecology here, when on the surface it appears that we have access to an unlimited supply of fertile land, fresh water and cheap food. Of course, if we dig a bit deeper we see that this is a fallacy. The rampant class-based food insecurity in our country is often hidden, and the degradation of natural resources is slow and creeping. Corporations control an ever-increasing share of the resources required to produce food, and unfortunately corporations care about profits, not feeding people.

In the final days, the forum's steering committee created a declaration that was reviewed several times by all participants before a final version was adopted. Rather than defining a set of practices, the declaration recognizes that there are differences between countries and territories. Instead, it lays out common pillars to adapt to local contexts.

In order to achieve food sovereignty, people and communities need to wrestle control of the means of production back from corporations. It has become more and more difficult for farmers to acquire and retain the resources they require – hence the demographic crisis in agriculture and the need for the work that the NFU Youth are doing with the National New Farmer Coalition. The policy needs we are looking at in that project are encompassed by the pillars of agroecology. Examples are better access to land and financing, farmer-to-farmer training and innovation, more supports for women in agriculture and developing local markets.

In fact, much of NFU policy is already in line with the pillars of agroecology. We are just not accustomed to using that term but it is important that we start to do so. We need to present a coherent and unified front with our La Via Campesina allies around the world in order to fight against the oppressive corporate control of our food system.

Ultimately, agroecology simply means bringing agriculture back into harmony with human ecology. Our ecology encompasses our biology, our environment, and our cultural and political structures. Agroecology means rethinking our relationships with our food, our planet and each other.

—nfu—

Common Pillars of Agroecology

from the
International Forum on Agroecology:

- Production practices based on ecological principles.
- Reduce externally purchased inputs and increase farm and community self-sufficiency to allow for greater farmer autonomy and strengthened rural economies.
- Peoples and communities need collective rights and access to the commons.
- Knowledge sharing for food producers needs to be horizontal, peer-to-peer and intergenerational.
- Solidarity between peoples, and between rural and urban populations, is needed to challenge corporate control of the food system.
- Direct, fair distribution chains and transparent relationships between producers and consumers are needed to displace control of global markets and generate self-governance by communities.
- Agroecology is political and requires us to transform the structures of power in society.
- Youth and women are the principal social bases for the evolution of agroecology. Territorial and social dynamics must allow for leadership and control of land and resources by women and youth.

The full Declaration of the International Forum for Agroecology can be found at:

<http://viacampesina.org/en/index.php/main-issues-mainmenu-27/sustainable-peasants-agriculture-mainmenu-42/1749-declaration-of-the-international-forum-for-agroecology>



Reclaiming our right to healthy food and environment...

Agroecology is the way

—by Dan Kretschmar, Region 3 Youth Advisor and IPC Representative

Tears rolled down my eyes as I listened to Marcos, an undocumented Mexican farm worker living and working in Pearson, Florida. He recounted the horrific conditions that farm workers are subjected to on a daily basis. The words "modern slavery" came to mind. I found it amazing how he kept his composure as he recounted stories from his community, such as, "our children are being born with a range of birth defects because pregnant women are forced to work in fields while a mere few meters away a toxic mix of agro-chemicals are being applied to the same field". Welcome to the industrialized food system!

In February, 2015 I participated in the Campesino to Campesino Agroecology Encuentro in Florida on behalf of the NFU. This La Via Campesina (LVC) gathering was the first of its kind in North America. My time was spent with an amazing and empowering group of farmers, farm workers, and people involved in the alternative food/social justice movement from across North America. The Encuentro strengthened LVCs commitment to, and the belief in, agroecology as a transformative process and the foundation for building food sovereignty. It also strengthened LVCs confidence in collective work and cooperation as the foundation of the struggle for social, economic, ecological and environmental justice. When working with these concepts and principles, we create changes through which the earth and peoples are again connected in harmony.

In Florida there are very few small farms/producers. The majority of farm workers have jobs on large industrial-scale farms. Their salaries have remained near stagnant. A farm worker will get about 85 cents for each 90-pound bag of oranges they pick. They have no citizenship rights and if they complain they are fired. Another worker is always ready to take the vacant spot on the bus to the farm. According to these farm workers, labour in industrial agriculture takes the dignity away from working out in the field. The work is boring and not meaningful. Marcos stated something that many of us already

know, "industrial agriculture is destroying our bodies, the earth, air and the water."

These wonderful people harvest the majority of the food and produce that is bought and consumed from our grocery store shelves. In the industrial model of agriculture, the farm workers do all the work while the landowners are more like the lords in a feudal class system. They are rarely seen by townspeople. They have agents who essentially find slaves to harvest the crops at the lowest cost to please the farm owner. The farm workers are often forced to go to food banks in order to feed their families.

However, things are changing in the farm worker communities of rural Florida. Farm workers have started community gardens where anyone can have a small plot of land to grow food. They practice agroecology and produce food for their family that is culturally appropriate and healthy. One of the farm workers who comes to the community garden daily, told me joyfully that "being a farmer is marvellous. You can teach your kids to be self driven and show them that farming can be very economically viable."

Agroecology can be seen as a return to the way we used to farm and the communities we used to foster 100 years ago. From what I have seen so far, agroecology is a means to building more autonomy for farmers and communities. If we are able to produce what we want with our own seeds we will start to see a radical transformation in our fields. Enhancing agroecology practices will lead to food sovereignty, which in turn will lead to more aware consumers who may think twice about going to the grocery store and supporting Monsanto and Wal-Mart the next time they need some food.

In these times of climate chaos, unfathomable food waste, soil erosion, and the tragic decline of rural communities, we need a viable and life-giving way to feed the planet. La Via Campesina believes that agroecology is the solution.

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These four points are some of the many that can be found in the full declaration from the Florida Encuentro:

- Agroecological agriculture that is practiced by peasant families and food sovereignty policies provide the only feasible solution to the manifold crises we face.
- Only agroecological methods of agriculture serve to adapt to climate change and provide greater flexibility and resistance to face these challenges.
- Only diversified agro-ecosystems and genetic diversity of local peasant seeds, seed systems and farmer knowledge will prepare us to face the challenges of the future.
- Agroecological agriculture requires a connection of people to the land and we must do everything in our power to halt land grabs and the loss of land in our diverse communities. We must also expand access to public land to protect our climate and feed our communities.

People are starting to care about where their food comes from, not just about cheap food. As this awareness continues to grow, we will reclaim the dignity of food and this will help us become rich in life again. As we abandon the consumer lifestyle, the capitalist system and the transnational corporations who profit from exploitation will be severely challenged. As we challenge capitalism, we birth a new cooperative local economic model rooted in solidarity where social justice will flourish. Agroecology will enable peasant and small-scale farmers to keep their way of life, their seeds, and knowledge/traditions to pass on to the next generation. I see a day when everyone has access to clean healthy food.

—nfu—

The declaration from the Florida Encuentro can be found at:

http://www.floridafarmworkers.org/images/my_images/pdf/DeclarationoftheMeetingofAgroecologyCampesinoaCampesino.pdf.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editor's note: the following letter to the editor was received prior to the last Union Farmer Quarterly but we forgot to include it. Our apologies. In reference to the first paragraph of the letter, members are welcome to photocopy the fact sheet to hand out to the public at local events.

Dear Editor,

The NFU produced an excellent Fact Sheet on GLYPHOSATE, distributed as an 'insert' with the Spring 2015 issue of the Union Farmer Quarterly. That four-page exposition should be made freely available by the NFU as a separate handout at public events ranging from Seedy Saturdays to Ploughing Matches, in particular, to reach the general public.

It was a surprise to learn that glyphosate, discovered in 1950, was originally used as an industrial 'descaling' agent and not recognized to have herbicidal activity until 1970! Glyphosate binds tightly to soil elements, e.g., magnesium (Mg), iron, and potassium, making them less available for plant use, but the article missed mentioning calcium, although implied as a Group II element like Mg. The binding of glyphosate to suspended clay particles (colloidal dispersions) in surface run-off results in this herbicide's toxicity to aquatic life.

Glyphosate, being a systemic herbicide, is absorbed by plant tissue, even more readily in combination with application of surfactants and adjuvants. This means that these chemicals get distributed throughout the whole plant including roots and seeds. The decaying roots become colonized by micro-organisms, including those causing crown and root rot diseases thus making fungal problems worse, for example, fusarium infection in subsequent crops when grown in affected fields. Degraded glyphosate is a source of phosphorous for fusarium. What was introduced as an agro-aid has become a scourge.

Even more alarming fifteen years after expiration of the protective patent on glyphosate is the fact that the PMRA (Health Canada) does not require data on the environmental and toxicological effects of glyphosate's complete commercial formulations.

George Neville, Ottawa, NFU Associate Member



Supply Management and Food Sovereignty

—by Dianne Dowling

On September 2, NFU Local 316 President and dairy farmer Dianne Dowling, spoke on behalf of the NFU at a conference in Brussels on the "Impact of liberalisation of dairy sector in Europe. What future?". The conference was hosted by the Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). She then spoke at a second conference on September 4 in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. Below is the text of Dianne's presentation.

Dianne farms with her husband Peter and son Tim at Doublejay Farm on Howe Island, near Kingston. Their milk is sold through the Organic Meadow Co-operative.

The three pillars of the Canadian supply management system are production discipline, import controls and cost-of-production pricing. Because the price paid to farmers is based on averaged cost of production there are no subsidy payments to dairy farmers.

The NFU considers Canada's supply management system to be an important institution that puts food sovereignty into action in Canada. Supply management ensures that Canadian consumers can get the milk and dairy products they require and that these are produced in Canada; that dairy farmers receive a price that covers their cost of production and that Canada's market is not destabilized by unregulated imports of dairy products. Supply management in dairy is an institution that has made it possible for many small, diversified, mixed family farms to remain viable during the continuing farm income crisis in Canada.

Our family owns and operates one of those small dairy farms. We milk twenty-five to thirty cows. By comparison, the average herd size in Canada is about seventy-five cows. Our farm is on Howe Island, located in the Thousand Islands at the east end of Lake Ontario, where it flows into the St. Lawrence River. We are the last dairy farm on the island — unlike fifty years ago, when there were twenty to twenty-five dairy farms on the island. So, in addition to being a small operation producing about 450 litres a day, we are the only pick-up of milk in our somewhat out-of-the-way location. Furthermore, we are certified organic producers, so we need transportation by a truck on a dedicated organic route, in a region where organic producers are widely scattered. It would be very difficult for a small, out-of-the-way dairy farm with a niche market product to prevail without supply management and the orderly marketing system.

The supply management system with its pooled resources allows us to succeed. It accommodates large, industrial model dairy operations, as well as small dairy farms like ours. It allows a diversity of sizes and methods of operation, so long as the milk meets the quality standard set for everyone. Supply management allows a province, or a nation, to have high quality food available for its people, at the same time as farmers can make a living, and have the resources and the capacity to care for their land, their animals and their infrastructure. Under supply management, farmers have a predictable cash flow, based on cost of production (not subsidies) and eaters have a safe, secure supply of food, without subsidies hidden in their taxes.

Fifty years ago in Ontario, there was a serious imbalance between the bargaining power of individual farmers supplying milk, and the bargaining power of corporations — processors, distributors and retailers — that make up the rest of the dairy food chain. Processors could take your milk today, and tell you tomorrow that they did not need it anymore.

My husband's parents experienced this situation in the 1950's when they were farming north of Toronto. They made an agreement with a processor in that region to supply the processor with milk. They increased their herd and infrastructure to fill the agreement. Then, one day, with no notice, the processor told them, "We don't need your milk." What were they to do with tomorrow's milk? And the next day's? And the next? You cannot turn off a tap on a dairy cow. How could they pay their bills and make their loan payments? Later they learned the processor did not need their milk because the company was trucking milk from farmers farther away — presumably at a lower price, to compensate for higher transportation costs. How could those farmers make a living on such lower prices?

(continued on page 21...)





Photo: Doublejay Bonami takes a break from intensive rotational grazing to spend some quality time with Dianne.

(photo by Tim Dowling)

Farmers demanded solutions and the Ontario government created the Ontario Milk Marketing Board, now the Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO). Farmers share the costs of transportation, inspections, milk quality testing, marketing and more, so that, regardless of the size or location of your farm, every farmer shares the costs. On behalf of thousands of dairy farmers, DFO negotiates with the processors, and farmers receive a fair price for their milk. With stability and balance in the dairy market, all parts of the dairy chain have a steady supply and revenue based on demand. More recently, milk is being pooled across five provinces in eastern Canada.

The concentration of food processing, distribution and retailing in the past fifty years has dramatically reduced the number of companies farmers are negotiating with -- all the more need for a strong marketing structure for farmers through supply management and orderly marketing.

In our world of uncertain economic, political and climate conditions, every community, province, state, nation or group of nations needs to increase its ability to feed itself, with the decision-making in the hands of the people of the area, not controlled by profit-driven corporations. Supply management has given dairy farmers the marketing power they need to continue to provide quality milk for their communities.

A team, an organization, a community is successful when it supports its members and helps them to develop their strengths and lessen their vulnerabilities. In nature, diversity and balance create ecosystems that are resilient and support their participants. By building strong individual farms, and giving them a strong, collective voice, we create a diverse, dispersed dairy sector, able to contribute to food security and food sovereignty in a region, a nation or a group of nations.

—nfv—

Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives set to release *The Harper Record 2008-2015*

The keynote speaker at our 45th National Convention in Saskatoon in November, 2014 was activist, researcher, author, editor and teacher, Teresa Healy. At that time, Healy introduced us to a project she was working on with Stuart Trew from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA). She described the project as a "collective remembering" of how Stephen Harper's policy, legislative and regulatory changes have affected our economic and social lives.

At the end of August, the NFU received a message from Healy letting us know that the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives planned to publish *The Harper Record 2008-2015* on October 1, 2015. The new book includes chapters on: Democracy; Labour; Social Policy; Economy; Food, Water, Air, Environment; and Security, Foreign Policy and Trade. Each chapter

includes several essays. On behalf of the NFU, Vice President (Policy), Ann Slater wrote an essay titled *From food security to food insecurity: How changes to the Canadian Wheat Board and seed policy leave farmers worse off* for the Food, Water, Air, Environment chapter.

In her email, Healy writes, "*The Harper Record 2008-2015* covers a lot of ground, much of it left out of recent books claiming to paint a full picture of the current government's record in office."

Once it is published, readers will be able to download, for free, a full PDF of the entire book, or any of the chapters therein, from the CCPA website at www.policyalternatives.ca. *The Harper Record 2008-2015* will be a companion to the first Harper Record which covered the period from 2006 to 2008. —nfu—

Food Secure Canada's Eat Think Vote Campaign

In the summer issue of the *Union Farmer Quarterly*, we introduced readers to Food Secure Canada's (FSC) **Eat Think Vote** campaign. In particular we published information on the *Growing our farmer population* plank of their campaign, which is one of four priorities in FSC's campaign. The other three priorities are introduced below:

To ensure that all Canadians have the right to food, we must set an income floor beneath which no Canadian can fall. Every Canadian has the right to food according to International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by Canada. Yet 4 million Canadians, including 1.15 million children, are food insecure. Food insecurity takes a substantial toll on physical and mental health, engendering significant costs to the health care system. While the causes and experiences of food insecurity are complex, the overwhelming factor is poverty, and policy solutions must therefore address income levels. Canadians living in food insecurity need a basic income that will allow them to fully enjoy their human right to food.

All kids in Canada deserve healthy food every day in school. We need to lay the foundation for healthy eating habits that will last a lifetime and ensure that learning is not hindered by a lack of access to good food. We are calling for a Universal Healthy School Food Program that will enable all students in Canada to have access to healthy meals at school every day. Building on existing programs across the country, all schools would:

- Serve a healthy meal or snack at little or no cost to students.
- Have programs on food education.
- Serve culturally appropriate, local, sustainable food to the fullest extent possible.

Affordable food in Canada's remote and northern communities will require food sovereignty. Indigenous communities in Northern Canada are experiencing a food security crisis with serious implications for health and well-being. Urgent action is required in the face of this unprecedented public health issue. The solutions must come from the communities themselves and the federal program designed to lower food prices in the North - Nutrition North Canada - needs a complete overhaul to be effective.



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 to 21 years old, and 21 to 30 years old. 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. **APPLICANTS CAN ONLY WIN ONCE PER AGE CATEGORY.**
- **The theme of this year's essay is: Soil: Our Common Ground.**
- Deadline for entries is November 1, 2015.
- The winners will be announced at the NFU Convention in November 2015.
- 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 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.

We Remember ...

JAMES HERMAN "JIM" MAYNE



Surrounded by his family, James Herman "Jim" Mayne, 64, passed away at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital on July 16, 2015. Loving father of Lori Mayne and J.W. Mayne. Cherished brother of Leah Mayne Caine, Joan (David) Kennedy, Kay (John) McIver and David (May) Mayne. Nephew of Jim (Caryl) Cummings and Evelyn Mayne. Beloved uncle of many nieces and nephews. Predeceased by his parents, Herman and Margaret "Peggy" Mayne of Emerald, brother George Mayne, sister Jeane Coburn, and brothers-in-law David Coburn and Mike Caine.

Jim was the former leader of the P.E.I. NDP and former president of the National Farmers Union. Jim served the NFU for 10 years, from 1970 to 1980. He organized membership drives and conducted seminars on farm policy and rural development while in the NFU's Department of Education and Organization, and assisted the national president as vice-president before taking on the role himself.

Jim assisted in the development of detailed and innovative policy papers on grain marketing and land ownership and use while representing the NFU at grain commission and land hearings. As president, he was the spokesperson for the NFU, instrumental in raising awareness of the plight of farmers across the country and advocating for the family farm.

Jim's children, Lori and J.W. said the following: "Dad chose this work because he loved it and he wanted to contribute to the island." They are most proud of the grace and strength he showed during his illness, but mostly Jim will be remembered for his love of people and how he loved his family.



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National Farmers Union
Union Nationale des Fermiers



NFU 46th National Convention

NOVEMBER 26TH TO 28TH, 2015

Hilton London Ontario, 300 King Street

London, Ontario

Theme: *Soil: Our Common Ground*

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(advertised incorrectly as \$135 in previous issue)

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