

# THE PLOUGHBOY

The Ploughboy Newsletter, July 2010

**YAA Directors witness the signing of the CAAP contract with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada by Association President, Mike Blumen-schein**



**I to r: Vanessa Falle, Ray Falle, Cain Vangel, Bill Drury, Jim Dillabough. Seated: Mike Blumenschein**

## **The Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program (Yukon)**

By Rick Tone

*Are you as smart as a cockroach?*

That was the question a convocation speaker put before a USA college graduating class. According to the speaker, the cockroach has been here since the beginning, and it has not only survived everything the planet could throw at it, but also thrived, even when it found itself in the most hostile of environments. He further speculated that even if we were to totally destroy earth by means of a global

nuclear war, one species would yet remain - the cockroach. The reason? - regardless of the environment and conditions in which it finds itself, the cockroach is able to adapt. Using this example, the speaker challenged those graduates to think about what they needed, beyond their newly minted diplomas, to succeed regardless of any contrary circumstances in which they may one day find themselves.

The speaker's second point to those graduates was that they certainly will encounter contrary circumstances and difficulties during their lives. Although recent decades have been characterized by almost uninterrupted prosperity and opportunity, this has never been the norm. Policies, politics, people, communities, nations, economies, wealth, technologies, methods, environments, weather, and the earth itself, which is subject to earthquakes, tidal waves,

floods, tornados, volcanoes, man made disasters and the like, are all in constant change, and sometimes dramatically so. Surely we need no further convincing having just witnessed the devastation of the Haiti earthquake, and having just experienced a global recession which was, and still is, so economically devastating to so many.

These same conditions have always characterized Canada's agriculture industry and the lives and fortunes of our farmers. If anything, we have been both more exposed and more vulnerable to them. We need to keep up with, and hopefully exceed, our competitors to maintain and grow our markets. We are vulnerable to fickle weather, the price of inputs, labour cost and availability, and all kinds of things over which we have no control. We need to keep up to changing technologies, circumstances and markets. So the big question for us is the same one the convocation speaker put to that graduating class, - are we as smart as a cockroach? That is, do we have the awareness, the foresight, the flexibility, the resilience, the ability and the determination to adapt to changing circumstances, to compete, to survive, to succeed, and indeed, to thrive?

Our agricultural policy makers at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, (AAFC), and their Provincial and Territorial counterparts are well aware of agriculture's many challenges and the needs of our industry to adapt to new realities. In fact, AAFC has developed a program to address this very thing. It is called the Canadian Agricultural Adaptation Program, or CAAP. (successor to the former ACAAF program).

CAAP is specifically designed to help farmers, and the agricultural

industry at large, to seize opportunities, respond to new and emerging issues and pathfind and pilot solutions to new and ongoing issues to help any agricultural sector adapt and remain competitive. Eligible projects could include proposals for capturing value added and new market opportunities; adapting to changing consumer demands; implementing strategies and processes to address disease outbreaks and other threats; developing technologies; conducting feasibility studies; testing new ideas and processes on a small scale which have potential for future larger scale application; prototypes, strategic assessments and market and venture assessments; and, developing the capacity and tools needed to anticipate and prepare for the future.

In Yukon, CAAP is managed by the Yukon Agricultural Association under an agreement with AAFC. The YAA has, in turn, set up an independent CAAP Council to adjudicate project proposals, and decide on their eligibility and the amount of funding support which may be made available out of the contributions AAFC has provided for this purpose.

In general, proponents are to contribute some cash &/or in kind, and their partners are to contribute some cash to any project they propose. Provided that the project is deemed to have potential application and benefit to a sector of our agriculture industry, the funding contributions approved by the Council are non repayable.

Projects from for-profit enterprises with budgets less than \$100,000.00 that are deemed to be of benefit principally to the proponent may or may not be eligible for non-repayable funding at the discretion of the Council. However,

if deemed repayable, the repayment period is 8 years on very reasonable terms. Similar projects over \$100,000.00 must be repaid.

Yukon's agriculture industry is small and still very much in the development stage, so ideas for projects which could further its abilities to meet challenges, its opportunities to grow and its ability to compete are being sought by the CAAP Council. If you have an idea to propose, and/or need help developing it, or completing an application, call us.

Anyone at any level of Yukon's agriculture and food industry from farm to retail is eligible to propose a project and receive funding provided the project meets the program criteria. Application forms and/or further information may be obtained by contacting the YAA-CAAP Council office by calling 867.668-6864 or by sending an Email to [admin@yukonag.ca](mailto:admin@yukonag.ca). AAFC may also be called toll free at 1.877.290.2188, or their web site may be visited at [www.agr.gc.ca/caap](http://www.agr.gc.ca/caap).

Food and its security and supply is everybody's business. Let's all do what we can to make sure Yukon's agriculture industry is there for all of us. CAAP is an opportunity to help us do just that. Lets use it!

---

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

THIS YEAR'S AG BRANCH FIELD DAY WILL BE HELD ON AUGUST 4 BEGINNING AT 10AM AT THE NIELSEN-LAMMERS EXPERIMENTAL FARM.

REFRESHMENTS AND BURGERS WILL BE SERVED.

YAA Memberships will be available HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE.

# 2010-2011 EXECUTIVE AND DIRECTORS

## YUKON AGRICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

### 203-302 Steele St. Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 2C5, (867) 668-6864

Mike Blumenschein, President	<a href="mailto:mblume@northwestel.net">mblume@northwestel.net</a>	668-24078	Box 20415, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 7A2
Dave Andrew, VP	<a href="mailto:kluane.dave@northwestel.net">kluane.dave@northwestel.net</a>	667-7844/334-3378	Box 40129, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 6M8
Cain Vangel, Treas.	<a href="mailto:fishonthebraincain@hotmail.com">fishonthebraincain@hotmail.com</a>	393-4483/334-5052	28 Logan Road, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 5X6
Warren Zakus, Secretary	<a href="mailto:warren@zakus.ca">warren@zakus.ca</a> , <a href="mailto:warren@zakusfarms.ca">warren@zakusfarms.ca</a>	456-4476	Box 40155, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 6M8
Claudia Heath, Director	<a href="mailto:claudia@northwestel.net">claudia@northwestel.net</a>	634-3881	Box 5420 Haines Junction, YT, Y0B 1L0
Vanessa Falle, Director	<a href="mailto:info@sourdoughsodbusters.com">info@sourdoughsodbusters.com</a>	633-5218	Box 21175, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 6R1
Ray Falle, Director	<a href="mailto:razorboard1@hotmail.com">razorboard1@hotmail.com</a>	633-5218	Box 21175, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 6R1
Paul Matheus, Director	<a href="mailto:matheus@northwestel.net">matheus@northwestel.net</a>	456-7551	Box 11277, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 6N5
Gail Riederer, Director	<a href="mailto:heartbarranch@yahoo.com">heartbarranch@yahoo.com</a>	393-1955	Box 20712, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A7A2
Joanne J. Johnson, Director	<a href="mailto:mclintockvalleyfarm@northwestel.net">mclintockvalleyfarm@northwestel.net</a>	660-5128	Box 31436, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 6K8
Andre Fortin, Director	<a href="mailto:aj@ajco.ca">aj@ajco.ca</a>	H. 633-5911 C. 335-0008	Box 20054, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 7A2
Tiana Zakus, Director	<a href="mailto:tiana@zakus.ca">tiana@zakus.ca</a> , <a href="mailto:tiana@zakusfarms.ca">tiana@zakusfarms.ca</a>	456-4476	Box 40155, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 6M8
Dallas Schaber, Director	None	668-3679	8 Mossberry Lane, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 5W4
Ralph Mease, Director	<a href="mailto:rmease@yahoo.ca">rmease@yahoo.ca</a>	996-2206	Box 87, Mayo, YT, Y0B 1M0
Bill Drury, Director	<a href="mailto:drury@northwestel.net">drury@northwestel.net</a>	668-1045	Box 20723, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 7A2
Wayne Grove, Director	<a href="mailto:eldorado@northwestel.net">eldorado@northwestel.net</a>	393-1942/334-1942	Box 20210, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 7A2
Rick Tone, Exec. Director	<a href="mailto:admin@yukonag.ca">admin@yukonag.ca</a>	668-6864; Home: 12 Spinel Pl. Whths, Y1A 6A6	<a href="mailto:tonere@klondiker.com">tonere@klondiker.com</a> 393-2747

*As many of you may know, our 5 year agreement with AAFC to administer their Advancing Agriculture and Agri-food Program (ACAAF) in Yukon ended March 31, 2009. Some ACAAF projects carried over and are still in progress, however, the ACAAF program has been replaced by CAAP, per the information on the front page of this newsletter. The Chair of the old ACAAF Council, John Lenart from Dawson, wrote a brief summary of the ACAAF program for presentation at the YAA AGM on May 1. Unfortunately, it arrived too late to be presented. We now reproduce it here for your information.*

#### ACAAF Summary

For the Yukon Agricultural Association Annual General Meeting, May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2010

Sometimes we each must be grateful for small advancements when faced with continuous adversity. This is how I see the pace of agricultural advancement in the Yukon and our relationship with the funding agencies of the Federal Government that support many of our humble activities. All suffer cold feet, or feel the frosty drying winds from the north or the right when not suffering under glaring heat of sun or media and all want to see the most come from the least. Reports must be written by all to bear down on the shelves and floors across the land and pennies must be accounted for and for all this we must be thankful.

Our recent past ACAAF program helped keep the office open and pay the staff. It certainly offered opportunities to the Ag community here and though the benefits of the program are not grandly obvious, we have been reminded or know better than ever the reasons why a dairy operation is not feasible or a multi use facility is so problematic. The whole country in some way knows of the limits of Bio-fuels, whether only by seeing the cost of food jump up when grains started selling to fuel industry instead of children. ACAAF was there to see us through that and paid the consultants of the land well to show us the way that was not to be.

But we are responsible not for such short-sighted endeavours but to assist our neighbours in the Yukon Agricultural community to grow as they might like and for my part I have tried to do this in my way. Our local meetings were always courteous and respectful and diligence maintained though time lines did get a bit long on occasion as they can. During yearly meetings in Ottawa I took a consistent message that we have different needs than much of the country's agricultural communities and a wider scope in which to serve our members was needed. This message has been echoed by the delegations from the NWT and Newfoundland and Labrador, and to a lesser extent the other Maritime Provinces. In this some ground has been saved from the tide of Treasury board accountability directives but it has been less than desired, and so restrictions are greater than ever on how funds are to be dispensed. This though is now the domain of the CAPP program and I have mixed feelings on the occasion of its birth which I will not go into, but rather show my thanks.

As Chair of the ACAAF program I want to express our thanks for jobs well done to many people. Chief among them are those close to home, Rick for pulling the whole thing together and for still being there, Tony for the upbeat attitude and advice and research on countless of items and Valerie who has done more than her share to keep the gunboats from sailing out the Rideau to sink us for past transgressions or omissions. The folks in Ottawa that manage and direct the program deserve our thanks too as they have assisted as they could and have been sympathetic to our issues if incapable of removing obstacles. Then there are the many fine people who have served on the council offering what skills they could bring to the table to help us sort out projects in, if not always professional manner at all times with respectful conduct for each other and the proponents.

As we move into the era of CAAP, I wish our new Chair and council the best. The path ahead is ever more restricted and over-managed and the challenges to the industry have not been lessened with the passage of the ACAAF years.  
Best Wishes, John Lenart

## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Last year the YAA grew to 93 members. It would be great if we could hit a hundred or more this year. In order to do so, we have to retain the membership we had last year plus add an extra seven.

You can help us achieve this goal by renewing your membership, if you have not already done so. Secondly, you can help us grow by inviting others you know to join.

Agricultural organizations give farmers a voice on issues and influence at the table. Stronger organizations help us have a stronger voice. Alone, we have little or none at all.

When you read the article at the end of this newsletter by Garnet Etsell, 2nd VP of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, you will notice his call to farmers: - "**For the message to be heard, producers need to actively participate and support the process and their commodity and regional organizations.**"

He is urging farmers across the country to support their local farm organizations. I am urging the same thing.

Join us. And while you are at it, consider joining other farm organizations too. They are all part of the fabric of our agriculture community, all contributing to the whole. Without them we are all the poorer.

There may be Lone Rangers out there who may be tempted to think, 'There's nothing in it for me. I'm doing fine on my own,' but remember, its not just about you. Its about neighbors and communities. Its about issues like succession, opportunities for young farmers, prices & public

policy. Its about supporting agriculture in Yukon. Its about having a say in the future of our industry and proudly presenting agriculture to the public. Perhaps your joining will help us to make a difference. And who knows, we may even be of specific service to you sooner than you think.

The YAA was created to do what the individual farmers who started it in 1974 could not do alone - Use the weight of an organization to more forcefully represent their individual and common concerns, and, promote and defend agriculture in Yukon. The YAA is still doing this today. With your support and participation, we will do it even better.

Membership is still only ten dollars a year, or you can pay for multiple years x \$10. I would love to have more multi-year memberships to reduce the number of annual renewals. Please consider joining for more than one year at a time, but whether one year, or 3 or 5 at at time, do join us, and encourage a friend to join too.

Membership does matter.

Thank you for your support.

## LEADERSHIP MATTERS

**If not you, then who? As it turns out, we have a full slate of Directors for this year including some very welcome new faces. But we are always looking for people to help with projects, and others to serve as directors and executive for next year. Why not you?**

*Here's an illustration of the need for leaders, doers, participants and mem-*

*bers, and what happens when we 'leave everything to George.' .....*

This is a little story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done

Classified:

*Yukon Raised Chickens*  
**Fed all organic feed**  
**Next batch ready July 21<sup>st</sup>**  
**\$5/pound**  
*contact Cain or Michelle*  
**393-4483 or Email**  
[\*\*cain@thefarmgate.ca\*\*](mailto:cain@thefarmgate.ca)

**Do you have something to advertise?**  
**Classified ads in Ploughboy are free.**

**Display ads may also be booked at the following rates:**

1/8 page - \$20  
1/4 page - \$30  
1/2 page - \$55  
Full page - \$100.00

Ploughboy is distributed electronically to over 150 recipients plus another 25 by regular mail, plus occasional distribution at meetings, workshops and the like.

Submission of articles and other materials for inclusion in Ploughboy are welcome and encouraged.

## STORY TIME - thanks to the contributors.

### Could This Possibly Be True?? Ploughboy does not vouch for it, but according to the source...

A few months ago, British Columbia Premier Gordon Campbell received and was reading a report that there were over 100,000 cattle guards in BC. BC ranchers had protested his proposed changes in grazing policies, so he ordered the Agriculture Minister to fire half of the "cattle" guards immediately!! Before the Minister could respond and presumably try to straighten him out, Leader of the Opposition (NDP) Carol James, intervened with a request that.. before any "cattle" guards were fired, they must be given six months of retraining. :)

**And these people are running the Province of BC? OMG!!**

Passed on to you without further comment....



A cattle guard, also known as a Texas gate.

A cowboy named Bud was overseeing his herd in a remote mountainous pasture in Alberta when suddenly a brand-new BMW advanced out of a dust cloud towards him.

The driver, a man in a Brioni suit, Gucci shoes, RayBan sunglasses and a YSL tie, leans out the window and asks the cowboy, "If I tell you exactly how many cows and calves you have in your herd, will you give me a calf?"

Bud looks at the man, obviously a yuppie, then looks at his peacefully grazing herd and calmly answers, "Sure, Why not?"

The yuppie parks his car, whips out his IBM laptop computer, connects it to his Cingular RAZR V3 cell phone, and surfs to a NASA page on the Internet, where he calls up a GPS satellite to get an exact fix on his location which he then feeds to another NASA satellite that scans the area in an ultra-high-resolution photo.

The young man then opens the digital photo in Adobe Photoshop and exports it to an image processing facility in Hamburg, Germany

Within seconds, he receives an email on his Palm Pilot that the image has been processed and the data stored. He then accesses a MS-SQL database through an ODBC connected Excel spreadsheet with email on his Blackberry and, after a few minutes, receives a response.

Finally, he prints out a full-color, 150-page report on his hi-tech, miniaturized HP LaserJet printer and finally turns to the cowboy and says, "You have exactly 1,586 cows and calves."

"That's right. Well, I guess you can take one of my calves," says Bud.

He watches the young man select one of the animals and looks on amused as the young man stuffs it into the trunk of his car.

Then Bud says to the young man, "Hey, if I can tell you exactly what your business is, will you give me back my calf?"

The young man thinks about it for a second and then says, "Okay, why not?"

"You're a Senator for the Canadian Government", says Bud.

"Wow! That's correct," says the yuppie, "but how did you guess that?"

"No guessing required." answered the cowboy. "You showed up here even though nobody called you; you want to get paid for an answer I already knew, to a question I never asked. You tried to show me how much smarter than me you are; and you don't know a thing about cows...this is a herd of sheep. . .

Now give me back my dog.....

## Biochar News and Developments

(reprinted from PEI ADAPT Council Agri-Newsletter, June 25, 2010)

*According to the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI), scientists have found a 150% increase in maize yield when poor soils were amended by biochar. (See: [BioPact](#) for details.) Because of these and other major benefits, biochar has reached the political agenda, with Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald saying that it is a possible saviour for Australia's carbon-depleted soils, and has multiple greenhouse gas benefits. A first project to assess the feasibility of building a renewable energy power plant that simultaneously yields electricity with negative emissions and biochar has been initiated.*

### Why biochar?

From: [Stock and Land](#); 29 Jan, 2009 09:34 PM

Biochar is the charcoal created by burning organic waste without oxygen—a charring process that also delivers a biofuel, syngas—to produce a very stable form of carbon that can persist, unchanged, for hundreds or thousands of years.

The technology's fans point out that unlike the end-product of the still-theoretical "carbon capture" technology being proposed for coal power stations, biochar both stabilizes carbon and enhances the biological cycle that humanity depends on.

Studies around the world, including in Australia, have shown that adding the char to agricultural soils can boost water and nutrient retention and crop yields, and lower nitrous oxide emissions from fertilizer by 50-80pc.

The history of biochar explains what it is and its benefits. Ancient Amazonian cultures used it to make soil that is still fertile after hundreds of years.

Hundreds, sometimes thousands of years after they were created by people living in the Amazon basin of South America, the black soils known as 'terra preta,' are still fertile to the point that some, 'like the Magic Pudding,' regenerate after being harvested for potting mix.

Part of terra preta's secret, researchers believe, is the big quantities of slow-burned charcoal that people from ancient cultures dug into these soils.

Science is trying to recreate terra preta soils, so far unsuccessfully. But it seems that some of terra preta's qualities can be recaptured using biochar.

Biochar contains valuable nutrients that help plant growth, but its primary long-term benefit lies in its complex structure that holds big quantities of nutrients, moisture and microbes in a way that is still accessible to plants.

Biochar trials on maize at NSW Department of Agriculture's Wollongbar facility found that when applied at 10 tonnes per hectare, the char tripled the biomass of wheat and doubled that of soybean, while lifting soil pH and calcium levels and reducing aluminum toxicity.

## Big Corporations vs...

(sent in by a member. Thanks. Check it out and let us know what you think)

"Multi-national corporations are waging a war against humanity.

This may sound like an exaggerated claim, but it's literally true as this video shows.

But they're not using bullets, they're using seeds.

Possibly the most important video you'll see this year - and will NEVER see on mainstream TV.

Please spread the word on this one."

Video: <http://www.brasschecktv.com/page/861.html>

## [The Netherland's DSM announces new process for ethanol production](#)

In the Netherlands, Dutch chemical company DSM announced June 30 a new process for production of ethanol from agricultural waste.

The breakthrough comes from two separate technology innovations with enzymes and advanced yeasts. Research on a fungus that thrives in compost heaps and fallen trees has identified enzymes that efficiently breaks down biomass into its sugars. Yeast selection and genetic engineering developed strains that can break down both the 5 and 6 carbon sugars.

The new process doubles the yield, compared to existing processes." DSM is working directly with customers and partners to develop localized, on-site production, viewed as more sustainable because it bypasses global supply chains to truly integrate conversion technology into the biofuel process itself. Click link below for -

[More on the story.](#)

## Yukon Invasive Species Council, Summer update, July 2010

(for those who don't know, YISC was formed in response to a growing problem of non native plant species establishing themselves and thriving to the detriment of native species and to the detriment of our general environment. These invaders are not only a concern for YISC to look after, but a concern which demands general attention and participation to slow, and hopefully stop, these plants from doing further damage. Opportunities to help are listed below. Your participation would be welcome. You are also welcome to attend the upcoming YISC meeting below to find out more about this issue and what needs to be done. Do check it out. Invasive species are truly a menace which affect us all. - Rick)

**Monthly meeting: July 20, 2010 at 3:30-5:00 at Environment Yukon main board room.**

### **Sweetclover pull with Lorne Mt. Community Association**

Date: August 3, 2010

Meet at 7.00 pm at the pull out on the Carcross Road just before the turn off to the Annie Lake Road.

Join the Lorne Mt. Community Association and the Yukon Invasive Species Council for a combined effort to pull sweetclover and other invasive plants in the Hamlet.

At the weed pull you will see first-hand the impact of invasive plants, learn to recognize them and learn about simple ways of weed management. One of the plant species we will be pulling is white sweetclover, a wide spread invasive plant in southern Yukon. Everybody can help!

Please bring your work gloves, weed whackers and we will drive to find the weed pulling locations.

For more information on invasive plants visit: [www.yukoninvasives.com](http://www.yukoninvasives.com) Call Agnes Seitz 667-7083 or Toos Omtzigt 456-7552 for more information

### **Giant Hogweed**

Back in May, The National Invasive Species Working Group had a first joined project which aimed on raising awareness about invasive plants and to building a spotters network. Over the last two month giant hogweed, the national working group and the work of the various councils were featured in the media. One example: <http://www.torontosun.com/news/canada/2010/07/11/14677316.html>

(Also check out CBC -link below- which featured giant hogweed on the national news on July 13. - Rick

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/yourcommunity/2010/07/poisonous-plants-what-should-you-look-for.html> )

All reported sightings in the Yukon so far were of cow parsnip or Angelica. One tip on how to tell giant hogweed and cow parsnip apart: The leaves of giant hogweed are lobed, deeply incised and up to 5 ft. across. Compare to mature leaves of cow parsnip which measure up to 2 to 2 ½ in diameter and are not as dissected as giant hogweed leaves. For more information, visit:

<http://www.invasiveplantcouncilbc.ca/invasive-plants-bc/invasive-plant-watch/giant-hogweed>

Our neighbours in BC have the giant hogweed and it is also reported from Kake (southeastern Alaska).

### **Didymo:**

This alga is also known as Rock Snot and is reported from the Kathleen River System, the Christmas Creek and the Jarvis River as well as the Yukon River.

Please contact Oliver Barker or Nathan Millar if you are interested in tracking Didymo in the Yukon.

Again humans are a main way that Didymo is moved around: On kayaks, canoes, motor boats, trailers, fishing gear and wading boots.

### **Weed Management**

A pull is scheduled for July 19th in Carcross with the Y2C2 team.

I also plan to coordinate with Y2C2 to pull Oxeye Daisy, Hawkweed and Goat's beard in Watson Lake.

For more information, call or Email: Andrea Altherr, Coordinator, Yukon Invasive Species Council  
[www.yukoninvasives.com](http://www.yukoninvasives.com), PO Box 30111, Whitehorse, YT, Y1A 5M2, (867) 393-3394

---

## **You Know It Will Be a Bad Day When**

*Airline food starts to taste good.      Your mother approves of the person you are dating.*

*Your doctor tells you that you are allergic to chocolate chip cookies.      You have to borrow from your VISA to pay off your MASTERCARD.*

*You realize that you have memorized the back of your cereal box.*

*Your cat abandons the nice box you prepared for her and has her kittens in your dresser drawer.*

*Everyone loves your driver's license picture.      You realize that the phone number on the bathroom wall of the bar is yours.*

*Your kids start treating you the same way you treated your parents.*

# Commentary: The Future of Food

By Garnet Etsell, Canadian Federation of Agriculture, 2nd Vice-President, February 22, 2010

As the Canadian Federation of Agriculture(CFA) celebrates its 75th anniversary, the future of Canadian agriculture is at a crossroads and the future of food in this country is uncharted. Currently, Canada has no comprehensive strategy for agriculture and food production in the future. A Canadian agricultural strategy is necessary for building the future of Canadian agriculture.

For our industry and food supply to be sustainable, farmers have to address three aspects: Economic, Environmental, and Social. Sustainability is sometimes confused with maintenance of current levels of production. However, it refers to producing food and other renewable products in a manner that is economically viable, environmentally enhancing, and contributes to the social fabric of this planet. Sustainable production should constantly be improving our food supply and enhancing our lifestyle, ensuring that our environment and resources to produce are adequate, and that the industry has a firm economic foundation. Sustainability requires that a strategic plan be in place.

Canada does not have a food strategy. We have a myriad of disjointed policies and programs. Too often, the belief that farming and food production will always be there leads to a lack of coordinated and functional agricultural policies. There is no particular objective, no vision and no stated intention of the programs. In our age of global instability, a nation should have a strategy to ensure its citizens will have food tomorrow and beyond. Canada needs to develop a strategy that will focus on and create a demand, both domestically and internationally, for high quality Canadian product.

Why do we need a National Food Strategy and what distinguishes a National Food Strategy from the five year agreements that we have had? The Agricultural Policy Framework and its successor Growing Forward have fundamentally been fiscal budgeting tools. As such they have consisted of budgeting envelopes, with some Vision Statements attached. It is hoped that the programs will result in the successful achievement of the Vision. A National Food Strategy is required to ensure that we have a vibrant contributing agriculture sector in Canada.

The CFA and its members will be embarking on a campaign to motivate development of a National Food Strategy and Canadian Agricultural Policy. The strategy will be led by farm organizations in collaboration with government, consumers, food processors and distributors. It is critical that producers and farm

organizations participate and take an interest in the development of this strategy, and demand that it happens.

The role of the CFA is to interface with government at the national level, and other farm organizations and governments at the international level. Agriculture in Canada is a shared jurisdiction - provincial and federal. Much of our input into strategy development must happen at the provincial level through our members. In Canada, we produce over 250 commodities and almost each has its own organization. Commodity organizations are the root industry organizations and focus on commodity specific issues. Because of the shared jurisdiction in Canada, most major commodities have a need for both provincial and national organizations. It is critical that producers and organizations participate in the process. .

Farmers must acknowledge that agriculture is a business. The purpose of a business is to undertake some activity that will generate a profit. It clearly is the business owner's responsibility to develop a strategy to generate a sustainable profit. It is essential that producers have the tools available to develop and implement the strategy. The role of governments should be to facilitate, regulate domestic production, regulate foreign imports, negotiate international agreements, facilitate international market opportunities and intelligence, and create an environment that encourages investment.

There can be a bright future for agriculture. Canada needs to develop an agricultural strategy for Canada that our nation, provinces, consumers, agri-business and producers can participate in, and that will create a healthier, environmentally sound and more economically stable nation. \_\_\_\_\_



**New YAA rollover plough demo at Lehnherr farm. Call Fritz at 393-3477, or the YAA for info on rental. The YAA also has a no till drill, an aerator and a manure spreader for rent.**