

September 2016

OFA IN SIGHT

Annual Publication from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture



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OFA In Sight is published for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), the largest general farm organization in Ontario, representing 36,000 farm families across the province. As a dynamic, farmer-led organization based in Guelph, the OFA works to represent and champion the interests of Ontario farmers through government relations, farm policy development, advocacy, research, community representation, media relations and more. OFA is the leading advocate for Ontario's farmers and is Ontario's voice of the farmer.

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Welcome to *OFA In Sight* — a special publication of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. Farming thrives on innovation and fresh ideas, and we're telling just a few of the stories of leadership and initiative within our 36,000 farm members.

In these pages, you'll read about OFA members around the province who are making a difference on their farm, in their community and within the agri-food industry. OFA is proud to share these stories, and proud to advocate for a sector that drives the economy in Ontario.

As we continue to celebrate 80 years of advocacy, OFA thanks its members who work hard every day to contribute the food, fibre, fuel and innovation that all Ontarians enjoy.

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Community comes together for a great show

Cover Story



Dunnville Fair and Farm Show organizers (left to right) Kris Melick, Marc Ruigrok, Cameron Hedley and Andrew Topp.

Kris Melick recalls the goosebumps he got when farm equipment started rolling into the old Dunnville airport in late August of 2015. It was opening day for the Dunnville Fair and Farm Show — a special event that Melick and a few friends had spent weeks planning in conjunction with the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture (HFA).

HFA was looking to change things up as they approached their 75th anniversary. They wanted to draw a bigger crowd to their annual event, and attract younger farmers who would help see the organization through the next 75 years.

That's when they approached Canborough farmer Melick and three of his fellow OFA farmer friends — Marc Ruigrok, Cameron Hedley and Andrew Topp. "HFA wanted to attract younger farmers like us, so we met over coffee and talked about the kind of events we'd like to go to," says Melick. "We

like hands-on events, and learning about new innovations. So we came up with the idea to host a mini farm show with a tractor and truck pull, and tillage demonstrations."

Good ideas spread quickly, and when the local fair board learned about the farm show plans, the event grew into the Dunnville Fair and Farm Show, with a new location to accommodate it at the local, closed airport and support from OFA's Proud to Lead fund to help with advertising.



After weeks of preparation and planning, the event attracted more than 6,000 people on the first day of the two-day event, held August 22 and 23, 2015. "We were overwhelmed with the attendance," says Melick. "We definitely attracted a younger

continued on page 6

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Opening day of the 2016 Dunnville Fair and Farm Show.

crowd, accomplishing what we'd set out to do for the local federation." The joint efforts of the local fair board, local farmers and the local federation rekindled a community connection with renewed interest and energy. And to recognize the inspiration and leadership of Kris

Melick and his friends, the four are now in charge of special events for the Haldimand Federation of Agriculture. **OFA**

Kris Melick operates Melick Farms, a cash crop operation in Canborough, Ontario, with his wife Crystal and children Jennessa and Brayden.



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Lambton farms invite the community over for breakfast



Lambton's Breakfast on the Farm event volunteers.

"Don't be afraid to open your farm to people." That's the big takeaway for Sarah Jackson after volunteering on the committee that has been bringing the local community and consumers to breakfast on a farm in Lambton County for the last three years.

A few years ago, members of the Lambton Federation of Agriculture (LFA), the local business development corporation, Sarnia area tourism and a few commodity groups were talking about what they could do to address the growing disconnect between farmers and consumers. They landed on an event to bring the two groups together, over breakfast.

"We really wanted to do something to help consumers understand where food comes from, and how safe it is," says Jackson. "When my cousin offered

their dairy farm that's within the Sarnia city limits, everything started to fall into place."

An estimated 800 people attended the 2016 event, held on a dairy goat and beef cow/calf operation near Sarnia that included ATV pasture tours, commodity partner displays and equipment demos. Online tickets sold out within hours.

Jackson knows that teaching young people about agriculture is an important part of connecting consumers with their food. "It would be incredible to reach every child in the county to teach them about their food. We have a long way to go, but this annual event is a great place to start."



Visitors tour the Forbes family dairy farm at Lambton's breakfast on the farm event.

It's clear this community sees the benefits of working together to bring consumers closer to their food. Sponsorship from commodity groups and local businesses fund the event. Most of the food is donated and local 4-H members provide on-the-ground support. "This is definitely a feel good event for farmers, the host family and the community. And a wonderful education opportunity for people wanting to learn more about where their food comes from," says Jackson.

Lambton's breakfast on the farm is held each year on the Saturday of Father's Day weekend. Kevin and Melissa Forbes hosted the 2014 and 2015 event on their dairy farm. Brian and Joan Pelleboer hosted the 2016 event. Organizers are always looking for farm locations to host their next breakfast in the Sarnia area. **OFA**

Sarah Jackson operates a game bird farm with her parents in Camlachie, Ontario, and is Vice President of the Lambton Federation of Agriculture.

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EFP kick starts on-farm improvements for young farmers



Jason, Amanda, Mackenzie and Margaret O'Connell.

Amanda O'Connell describes the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) Program as a resource to answer questions you never knew you had. As a new farmer in 2006, she initially participated in the EFP to update tillage practices on her family's farm in Lanark County. Program funding helped Amanda and her husband Jason transition from heavy field tillage to reduced tillage and precision farming practices. They couldn't believe the results.

"We reduced our field inputs, saved money and increased efficiencies while improving our farm's environment," says Amanda. The first EFP for their farm was done by Amanda's father, Stuart Hammond, more than 10 years ago. Stuart also completed a Nutrient Management Plan that continues to benefit the farm business.

As a beginning farmer, Amanda enjoyed learning about on-farm environmental management. She admits to learning things she didn't even know were a concern. And she's implemented many of the small changes to the day-to-day farm practices like manure application, buffer strips and managing waterways that will have a long-term impact.

Most recently Amanda and her family have adapted some of their hay fields to accommodate bobolink habitats. "We found out about a program to protect the bobolink, a threatened species, through the EFP. We were able to seed some hay fields and delay cutting to protect the birds," says Amanda. EFP funding provided the kick start they needed to protect the habitat, and made the crop transition financially feasible — an important factor for this young farm couple as they grow and invest in the farm.



Delayed hay cutting to protect bobolink habitat on Sunol Farms.

“Our farm has become more efficient through the EFP Program, helping us manage our farm more effectively and invest in new technology,” says Amanda.

The EFP Program marks its 25th anniversary in 2016. The OFA, through

the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition (OPEC), was instrumental in the development and implementation of the Environmental Farm Plan Program in Ontario. **OFA**

Amanda and Jason O’Connell operate Sunol Farms, a dairy and cash crop farm in Carleton Place, together with Amanda’s father Stuart Hammond.

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Baling up plastic is the latest crop for this beef farmer



Lynn Leavitt, U-Pac Agri Service, stands with a plastic bale wrap compactor that crushes used wrap into large square bales.

Lynn Leavitt is building a greener future for Ontario — one bale of plastic at a time. The Prince Edward County farmer has created a system to recycle plastic bale wrap, and a new business U-Pac Agri Service. He has designed a compactor that crushes the used wrap into large square bales, found a company to recycle the compacted wrap and is organizing delivery of the first load to a recycling plant.

Six years ago, a joint county federation project between Prince Edward, Hastings, Northumberland and Lennox and Addington Counties looked at how they could stop filling the landfill with bale wrap. “We all came together to address the problem,” says Leavitt. “There wasn’t an environmentally friendly option for disposing of the wrap at the time so we started talking.”

Some counties started picking up wrap with municipal recycling. Others found options for disposing of the wrap. Leavitt was convinced the used bale wrap should be recycled.

After trial and error, Leavitt landed on a compactor that is filled with bale wrap and then crushed into a square bale. Bale wrap can be added regularly to ultimately create a 40" bale of plastic that weighs about 900 lb. "The key is to keep the plastic clean," says Leavitt who has discussed the recycling process at length with potential end users. "The cleaner the plastic the higher the grade. We are asking farmers to dry the wrap and shake out mud and lose particles."

Ideally Leavitt would like to market the compacted bale wrap to local recyclers, but for now he's filling his first test load of 40 bales of compressed plastic for a U.S. recycler. He's partnered with the Prince Edward Lennox and Addington Community Futures Development Corporation to access funding and start the business.

"There's little value in the plastic so I'm trying to keep costs low," he says. "I want to see this problem solved. Our mission is to help farmers recycle in an efficient and cost effective way." **OFA**

Lynn Leavitt raises angus cattle and produces scrap plastic with his family in Prince Edward County and is a member of the Prince Edward County Federation of Agriculture.

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Advocacy comes with the territory when you farm on the urban fringe



Halton Region Federation of Agriculture members and volunteers.

For James Fisher, advocacy is part of the job when you farm in Halton Region. A fifth generation farmer in Burlington, Ontario, Fisher has seen his share of legislation, uninformed decisions, red tape and zoning changes over the years.

“Many of the issues and regulations affecting Ontario agriculture started in the Halton Region and have spread across the province,” says Fisher, who has been actively advocating for agriculture since joining the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture (HRFA) board of directors in the mid 1990s.

Many farmers in Halton Region, including Fisher, have dealt with regulations and legislation resulting from farming in an urban dominated

area where political and bureaucratic decisions are often made from an urban perspective. Fisher looks at his experiences with the HRFA as a learning opportunity. He’s learned a lot from fellow directors and is proud to have been a part of many advocacy opportunities. From public meetings, research, consultations, federation meetings and personal appeals, Fisher has worked with fellow HRFA members to advocate on property taxation, conservation authorities and land zoning.

“Advocacy is about showing up,” says Fisher. “If you don’t come to the table, they are going to do it without you.” And he knows firsthand how challenging it is to see the business of farming in Halton Region continuously face uninformed regulations, bylaws



Halton Region of Federation meeting attendees.

and land plans. “If HRFA hadn’t taken an active role a few years ago, two thirds of agriculture in our area would be considered legal, non-conforming land use,” he says.

Advocating for agriculture has become a necessary part of farming for Fisher and many of his fellow farmers in the Halton Region. He farms close to a growing urban area and is governed by the Greenbelt and the Niagara Escarpment Commission. “Speaking

up and being an advocate can be challenging, but it’s important,” says Fisher. “Bureaucracy can be frustrating, but advocacy is about educating the public and politicians whether it’s at a meeting or through social media.” **OFA**

James Fisher operates a hay, cash crop and beef farm in Killbride, Ontario with his father and son. He has been a volunteer with the Halton Region Federation of Agriculture for more than 30 years.

Farm & Food Care Ontario congratulates the **Ontario Federation of Agriculture** on its 80th anniversary.

We have appreciated our strong partnership with OFA for more than 30 years and look forward to many more.



www.FarmFoodCareON.org



OFA celebrates 80 years of advocacy

It was 1936 when the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) first began. As we celebrate eight decades of working together with Ontario farmers, let's take a short trip through the history of OFA.

1936 — Representatives of Ontario's farm groups met at the Royal York Hotel in Toronto to establish a provincial branch of the Canadian Chamber of Agriculture. The new organization was called the Ontario Agricultural Conference. The first chairman was Herbert H. Hannam. Marketing and policy issues were identified as top priorities.

1940 — The name was officially changed to the Ontario Federation of Agriculture.

1941 — OFA hired its first permanent staff.

1945 — OFA conducted its first major survey on the state of farming and farm organization activity.

1949 — OFA started Co-operators Insurance Association of Guelph (CIAG) as a service to farmers. It started as a wholly-owned subsidiary of OFA. The Co-operators developed in large part from a growing need for insurance protection for farmers.

1968 — OFA reorganized its structure to allow for individual farmers to become members of OFA.

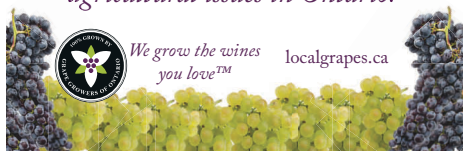
1969 — The first individual service member (ISM) membership was sold on September 12, 1969 for an annual fee of \$20.00. By November 1969 at its annual meeting, OFA had collected 758 members.

1992 — On Friday, February 21, nearly 40,000 farmers and their families



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OSMA would like to extend our sincere thanks and congratulations to the OFA for their work and dedication to Ontario's agriculture industry over the last 80 years!

travelled to Ottawa for the Canadian Farm Family Demonstration on Parliament Hill. Heralded as the largest rally ever held on Parliament Hill, OFA members were encouraged to add their voice to show the Prime Minister that the future of Canadian farm families must not be traded away.

1992 — The Environmental Farm Plan was established through a working group — chaired by OFA president Roger George — that included OFA, CFFO, AGCare and the Ontario Farm Animal Council.

1993 — Farm Registration and Funding for *Farm Organizations Act* was passed to provide a secure and stable funding mechanism for general farm organizations. The legislation was implemented in 1994.

2007 — OFA board size was reduced from 100 to 18. The Policy Advisory

Council (PAC), comprised of commodity groups and members from each region is set up to discuss and debate major farm issues, and provide policy advice to the board.

2010 — OFA worked closely with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and the entire food chain, to create the National Food Strategy® (NFS) — a vision for the future of food in Canada.

2012 — OFA played an integral role in the development of HayEast 2012, helping coordinate this industry-wide, volunteer-run program that provided time, money and hay to farmers devastated by drought in Ontario and Quebec in 2012. The program mirrored the HayWest program of 2002 when Western Canada faced drought.

2016 — OFA celebrates 80 years of advocating for Ontario agriculture and Ontario farm families.

Join in the celebrations!

There's still time to take part in special 80th anniversary activities with OFA.

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Click on the OFA 80 logo at ofa.on.ca for more details.

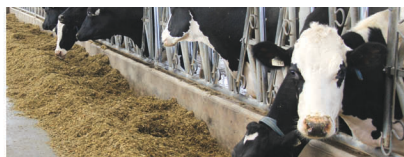
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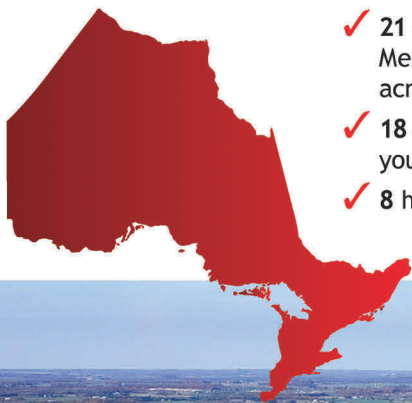
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