

## Any Investment in Local Farms Benefits the Entire Community

“We need to be good neighbours as well as good farmers,” producer Dean Manning is fond of saying. He and his wife Catherine operate a mixed farm in Falmouth, outside of Windsor, including 100 head cow-calf beef herd, grains, a variety of greenhouse crops, bedding plants, and other vegetables, most of which they sell directly through their seasonal on-site farm market. The Mannings’ commitment to being good farmers and good neighbours led to their winning the 2010 Farm Environmental Stewardship Award.

Mixed farming is not without its challenges, and unreliable beef prices in recent years prevented the Mannings from making any large capital outlay for farm improvements during that time. They have, however, benefited from funding from the Farm Investment Fund, which, Dean says, “helped us improve the soil and water environments that we work with everyday, and also helped us better manage our farm and market our products,” including the greenhouse and other vegetable crops they sell through Mannings’ Farm Market.

“Any investment in a local farm always benefits the entire community,” Dean says of the Farm Investment Fund. “We ourselves deal directly with consumers and the message that we receive from them all the time is one of appreciation. They are glad they can get the safe, tasty, and healthy products that they want, and that these products are grown right in their own community,” a community which has grown up all around the Manning farm in recent years. Dean continues, “So the better job we can do at that, the more the community benefits.” Catherine adds, “We welcome customers on our farm, where they can see first-hand how we do things,” she says. “They come away with a better understanding of how much work we dedicate to being good farmers and land stewards.”

Asked about the soil and water improvements that he has made to his farm, Dean Manning says that

he could not have done as much as he has to improve his farm’s environmental footprint without assistance from the Farm Investment Fund. “Most of the projects we’ve undertaken, we couldn’t have completed, not with the price of beef like it’s been,” he says. He has plans for further land improvement projects in coming years with help from the Fund, including dykeland improvement, better water distribution, soil improvement, and farm energy efficiency. He and Catherine also plan to further their skills in business and farm planning under the various categories for project funding.

The Mannings believe the Farm Investment Fund is hugely important to farmers everywhere. “When you rely on the marketplace to make a living, you never get to do all the things you would like to do to improve your operation,” Dean says. “You have to balance new growth and development with maintenance of the status quo, and you always must budget for the unexpected.”

**“With the Farm Investment Fund, we’re able to do a little more each year to improve our environmental footprint, our marketing, and so on,” he continues, pointing out, “Funding for on-farm projects is all taxable income—so no matter what tax bracket a farm is in, a certain percentage of the funding is going to go back into the government budget anyway. It doesn’t cost the government or the taxpayer that much, and it brings a lot of benefits to those who use it.**

