

News & Views

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Kings County Farm receives Environmental Farm Stewardship Award

Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture and its Environmental Farm Plan team are thrilled to announce the winners of the 2018 Environmental Farm Stewardship Award – D & M Lightfoot Farms/Lightfoot & Wolfville Vineyards.

Michael and Jocelyn Lightfoot own and operate D&M Lightfoot Farms, as well as Lightfoot & Wolfville Vineyards – located in the stunning Annapolis Valley. Together they are owners and stewards of 300 acres of land across the valley, 37 acres of which are vineyards – with 14 acres in Wolfville and 23 in Avonport. They also have 50 acres of wild/natural areas and pasture/forage land. Lastly, they have 200 acres of woodland in three unique parcels – all of which are left alone and promoted as natural mixed Acadian Forests. In addition to the vineyard, they also run a supply managed poultry farm.

The Lightfoot's make an effort to be as energy efficient as possible - in the poultry facility, they have upgraded the exhaust fans to low-energy models, changed the incandescent lightbulbs over to LEDs, as well as upgraded the insulation to conserve heating oil in the winter months. The winery's hospitality building was designed with energy saving in mind, with the use of air to air heat pumps, as well as the use of wood to heat the outdoor oven on the patio. They even implemented a water runoff plan and created



Shown above (l to r) Victor Oulton, President; Jay Woodworth, EFP Coordinator; Michael Lightfoot and Honorable Kieth Colwell, Minister of Agriculture during the NSFA Annual Banquet and presentation of the award.

catchment areas with a variety of vegetation to better absorb water runoff. They utilize the manure waste from their heritage breed animals as the basis to their extensive compost program. With this, they create their own compost teas which are used as the vineyards source of soil fertility, enhancing microbial activity and thus increasing the capacity of the soil to absorb and retain water.

With the cash award the family will be able to make further environmental improvements to their farm, in addition to the cash prize they also received a hand painting of their farm, that was presented at the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture's annual banquet.



@NSFAFANE

Viewpoint

Another AGM in the history books! I know I'm biased, however, I thought it was a good one. There was lots of discussion around the issues that affect our farm community and lots of passion in the discussion.

Although the keynote speaker on mental health, Andria Jones-Bitten, brought in jointly by Farm Safety Nova Scotia and the Federation, wasn't able to travel due to weather she was able to attend via the internet which worked quite well. The comment she made about resiliency really struck me; I've heard it described as mental, physical and spiritual wellness and the importance in trying to keep them in-balance. From her presentation it seems important to keep some of this wellness "in the bank" so we have reserves for the stressful times. That's not always easy and the idea is that it's a work in progress and not always perfect. A telling moment in the meeting was when she asked for a show of hands in response to a couple questions. When the audience was asked how many people would help out a neighbour or friend if asked, most of the room raised a hand. However, when the audience was asked if they would ask a friend or neighbour for help, not many hands went up. A good lesson that people are there to help when we have the fortitude to ask.

Faith Matchett from FCC also spoke about mental health and highlighted the initiatives that the company is making to support farmers. FCC has a publication, Rooted in Strength, available to support farmers and those who support farmers. There is lots of information and tips on how you can deal with stress on the farm and "know what you can control". The message is similar to that delivered by Dr. Jones-

Bitten - take care of your body, ask and offer help, and have some fun.

Our own Chris van den Heuvel recently spoke to the House of Commons Agriculture Committee on Mental Health Challenges in Agriculture. Chris spoke about the efforts taking place here in Nova Scotia as well as personal challenges around the barn fire on their farm a few years ago and his accident which happened while they were rebuilding. The audio of his presentation can be found on the House of Commons website at www.ourcommons.ca.

Public Trust was the other big message delivered to the AGM by Andrew Campbell. The disconnect continues between consumers, their food and the farmers that grow it. He did a good job talking about the value of communicating through social media as well as the risks and unintended consequences. Andrew talked about telling our story and I think that's the lens farmers want to put on it as well – we need to take the mystery out of farming and explain our farm practices to the public so they understand and trust what we do.

We do have a measure for the impact of what we do around what we are calling "public trust". Every year, for the last number of years, Canadian Centre for Food Integrity has conducted a consumer survey around trust in our food system. The percentage of consumers that hold a positive or very positive view of agriculture dropped this year to 55% which is down 6% from the previous year. It would be our contention that a lack of information is at least part of what is affecting consumers' belief in the safety and animal welfare of the food they consume. We can and should do more to enhance



Henry Vissers

Executive Director, Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture

this awareness. We can't take on the world as far as those that are simply against normal farming practices, but we can make sure our consumers are informed. A better-informed consumer is our goal. In our strategic planning exercise, public trust has been an issue that is high on the priority list. I expect one of our measures of success will be the CCFI survey with an additional survey sample from NS so we can measure provincial trends.

Closing off for the year I would like to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and happy and successful New Year. Take time to decompress with family and friends as we reflect on the year and plan for the future.

Comments?

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Policy and Resolutions from the 2018 AGM

The AGM is an avenue where NSFA farm members have the opportunity to present issues and associated solutions. At the 2018 AGM, NSFA passed five standing policies, three of which will be familiar from years past, and five new resolutions. Updates on the standing policies and resolutions can be found in future issues of the News and Views along with our website and Friday eNews.

STANDING POLICIES

Agricultural Land

It shall be the policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to address land issues through a joint committee and collaborative effort. The Federation will lobby for a comprehensive land use strategy that will include an agricultural land bank, 0% taxation on land owned by a registered farm or land actively maintained as farmland by a registered farmer, access to Crown Land for agriculture use, and support for those who bring land into agriculture production. The Federation will also use the appropriate avenues to request at minimum that 5,000 acres of agriculture land be placed under easement within the five-year review of EGSPA.

Labour

It shall be the policy of Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to partake in consultations and work with industry stakeholders and organizations to identify changes that need to be made for the foreign worker programs. The Federation will also work with appropriate bodies to ensure training and other translatable supports are available for foreign workers. NSFA will also work with stakeholders to ensure that programs to hire local labour are well communicated and accessible to farmers.

Regulatory Burden

It shall be the policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to continue to monitor, participate and communicate changes to regulations at the provincial and federal levels that will impact agriculture. NSFA will also work with industry stakeholders to ensure compliance requirements are well communicated throughout the industry.

Climate Change

It shall be the policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to work with government, industry and stakeholders to ensure that the Agriculture Industry of Nova Scotia has the capacity to manage water resources in light of climate change. The Federation will also lobby government to implement programs to support farms with on farm climate change mitigation strategies.

Transportation

It shall be a standing policy of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture to be actively engaged in the development of new legislation regarding transportation as it pertains to agriculture. NSFA will also lobby Nova Scotia Department of Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal to ensure that agriculture is a lens that is applied with considering the reclassification of roads.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution A-18-01, Limestone Transportation Program Year Round Accessibility

Whereas Nova Scotian soils are naturally acidic; and
Whereas the application of lime is known to raise pH of soils; and
Whereas lime is available year-round, can be stockpiled and can be applied almost any time of the year (weather permitting); and
Whereas the limestone transportation

subsidy through the Business and Risk Management Programs has been in existence for several years so a general pattern has been established for the budgeted amount of funds required to finance the program; and
Whereas the Limestone Transportation Program is fully funded provincially and does not require federal approvals so it can be delivered with more flexibility;
Therefore be it resolved, that the Federation lobby the Department of Agriculture to modify the Limestone Transportation Program so producers can access it at any time of the year without the existing rigid application and claiming deadlines.

Resolution A-18-02, Inclusion of Gypsum under Provincial Subsidy Program

Whereas limestone transportation is covered under the Limestone Assistance Provincial Programs; and
Whereas many soils used for growing vegetable and other crops have adequate pH but are low in calcium and sulphur; and
Whereas gypsum is used as an excellent source to build soil calcium and sulphur levels;
Therefore be it resolved, that the NSFA lobby the Minister of Agriculture and NSDA Programs to include assistance for trucking Gypsum under the Provincial subsidy program similar to that of trucking assistance of lime.

Resolution A-18-03, Add Wildlife Controls to the CAP Program

Whereas wildlife damage to many crops can have a significantly negative economic impact; and
Whereas there are many good control systems such as netting, fencing, and various deterrent devices that require an initial capital investment; and
Whereas these wildlife controls would

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Policy & Resolutions

increase, yield and quality and profitability across a broad range of crops and commodities;
Therefore be it resolved, that wildlife controls be added to the CAP program.

Resolution A-18-05, Cell Phone and High Speed Internet

Whereas, the Ivany Report noted the strong contribution potential for rural based businesses in Nova Scotia; and Whereas, it is critical to the success of rural businesses in Nova Scotia to have access to reliable cell phone service and high speed internet; and Whereas, both of these services are not provided in an accessible manner to all Nova Scotia businesses;
Therefore be it resolved that, the NSFA lobby the Minister of Agriculture, the Premier of Nova Scotia and the appropriate federal, provincial, municipal departments involved in business de-

velopment and communications along with the CRTC to request their involvement in resolving this lack of services that are essential to businesses in this province.

Resolution A-18-06, Local Food Procurement

Whereas Nova Scotia grows healthy and safe food; and Whereas it is getting more difficult to obtain and maintain market share; and Whereas Nova Scotians deserve to have access to our great food;
Therefore be it resolved, that the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture lobby the provincial government to primarily procure locally available Nova Scotia products and ensure minimum procurement from their third party providers in all government institutions by 2025.

NSFA Executive Committee for 2019

The NSFA Annual Meeting saw Kimberly Stokdijk finishing her term on the executive committee and her replacement was voted in. At the Annual Banquet, Kimberly was presented with a token of appreciation for her time and effort to the executive.

Replacing Kimberly is Allan Melvin of Melvin Farms in Kings County.

Below is the Executive Committee serving the NSFA members for 2019 -

VICTOR OULTON, PRESIDENT

TIM MARSH, 1ST VICE-PRESIDENT

CHRIS DEWAAL, 2ND VICE-PRESIDENT

AMANDA EISSES - MEMBER AT LARGE

LAUREN PARK - MEMBER AT LARGE

SYLVESTRE DION - MEMBER AT LARGE

ALLAN MELVIN - MEMBER AT LARGE

CHRIS VAN DEN HEUVEL - PAST PRESIDENT, CORPORATE SECRETARY TREASURER & CFA DIRECTOR

NSYF Elect 2019 Board



2019 Board (l to r) Brooke McNeil, Secretary; Jillian Bent, Western Region; Alana Bent, Treasurer; Rebecca O'Connell, President; Nicholas Roy, Past President; Larry Weatherby Jr, Vice-President and Jonathan Waugh, Central Region.

Biomass Crops

A Chicken and Egg Story (Part 2)

Submitted by: J. Kevin Vessey, Biology Dept., Saint Mary's University

In my article in the August/September edition of News and Views, I described a dilemma in the introduction of 2nd-generation biomass crops (i.e. fast-growing grass and tree species grown solely as feedstocks for processing into biofuels and other bioproducts). Part of the problem is that developers and investors will not spend the 10's to 100's of millions of dollars to build a biorefinery to convert the biomass into the bioproducts without having a guaranteed supply of biomass at a price they can afford and with the appropriate quality characteristics. The other part of the problem is that agricultural producers will balk in making investments in time, land and planting materials (i.e. seeds, rhizomes and cuttings) unless they know they will have a market for the biomass they produce. Hence the "chicken and the egg story" – which comes first, the biorefinery to process the biomass, or the biomass to feed into the biorefinery?

A potential solution to this dilemma is being pursued in Nova Scotia. Research is underway to determine the yield potential and quality characteristics of four biomass crops (switchgrass, Miscanthus, hybrid-poplar and willow) at sites across Nova Scotia. The research is being carried out by my research team at Saint Mary's University and in collaboration with colleagues at the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) Research Station in Nappan, and NSFA members across Nova Scotia.

The research involves establishing 10 experimental sites across Nova Scotia. The yield of switchgrass, Miscanthus, coppiced hybrid-poplar and coppiced

willow will be determined on these sites for 4 years. Each crop will also receive one of three biofertilizers – organic amendments that will be tested for their ability to improve the growth of the crops. We will also determine quality characteristics of the harvested biomass (e.g. nutrient and ash content) and test the soil for changes in quality, especially carbon content.

The biofertilizers that will be tested on these crops may include things like biochar, digestate from anaerobic digesters, and a mixture of mechanical-pulp-mill residual fiber and fly/wood ash. These organic amendments have all been shown in other studies to improve soil health and crop growth, but their effects on the growth of biomass crops have not been well studied. These biofertilizers are all by-products in the processing of biomass into biofuels and other bioproducts. Biochar, which is almost pure carbon, is a by-product in the making of bio-oil in a process known as pyrolysis. Digestate is a largely liquid by-product of anaerobic digestion, the fermentation of biomass in the absence of oxygen to produce biogas. Pulp-mill residual is a non-toxic by-product of paper making that is composed largely of very short wood fibers, too short for paper production. Utilization of these by-products as biofertilizers in the production of more biomass is a beautiful example of adding value to both the by-products and the biomass feedstocks within the value chain.

Our goal in this research project is to address the "chicken and egg story" in the supply and demand for biomass crops. We hope to demonstrate the

Carbon Pricing in Nova Scotia

The regulations for the Nova Scotia Cap and Trade program were released in late November 2018 - around the time of the announcement of the Federal Backstop Program.

As you have likely heard, the Federal Program will deliver a rebate to households in the provinces that there isn't a provincial program in place. While here in Nova Scotia we won't receive those rebates, we will see a much less increase on fuel and energy prices. According to reports by the provincial government, we will see an increase of about 1 cent per litre to the price of gas, compared with about 11 cents per litre by 2022 under the federal approach.

It is unfortunate that there isn't a fuel tax exemption in Nova Scotia's model of Cap and Trade; however, it looks as though we will be in a better position than if we had to comply with the Federal Backstop.

Beyond the price of fuel and its implication, a major concern is competitiveness. Not only are we competing against imported food from jurisdictions without Carbon Pricing, we are now competing with other provinces that have different Carbon Pricing schemes in place.

Be sure to check out climatechange.novascotia.ca, a website developed by the province, which highlights actions, including details of the Cap and Trade Program, taking place to combat climate change.

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Total area = 85 m x 49 m = 4165 sq. m = 1.03 acre																Total length: 85 m																																																		
4 m				1 m				4 m				1 m				4 m				1 m				4 m				1 m				4 m				1 m				4 m																										
Total width 49 m	3 m	10 m	Switchgrass-1												Switchgrass-2												Poplar-3												Willow-4																											
			CT				BF1				BF2				BF3				BF3				BF1				CT				BF2				CT				BF1				BF3				BF2																			
3 m	10 m	Poplar-1												Miscanthus-2												Miscanthus-3												Switchgrass-4																												
		BF2				CT				BF3				BF1				BF3				BF2				BF1				CT				CT				BF2				BF3				BF1																				
3 m	10 m	Willow-1												Willow-2												Switchgrass-3												Poplar-4																												
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3 m	10 m	Miscanthus-1												Poplar-2												Willow-3												Miscanthus-4																												
		BF3				BF1				CT				BF2				BF3				BF1				CT				BF3				BF1				CT				BF3				BF2																				

Layout of a field site to test the growth of switchgrass, Miscanthus, hybrid-poplar and willow with three biofertilizers (BF1, BF2, BF3) and a control (CT). Total area of the site is approximately 0.42 ha or 1.1 acres. The experiment will be replicated at 10 sites across Nova Scotia.



Students standing in plots of switchgrass (foreground) with coppiced hybrid-poplar in the background at the AAFC Research Farm in Nappan, NS (November 2017).



Congratulations to Curtis and Ann Millen of Millen Farms. They are the winners of the MCT Insurance Farm Quote Contest, and won an all-expense paid trip to the Royal Agriculture Winter Fair in Toronto, ON.

As one of Canada's leading insurance brokers, we work together with top farm insurance providers to offer you customized coverage options and benefits. Whether you own a large scale commercial farm or a hobby farm, we'll find you the best insurance for your unique needs.

MCT's Farm Insurance Program is designed for agricultural business operators specializing in a variety of farming, including: livestock, produce, cash crops, dairy, wineries and orchards.

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Upcoming Events

JANUARY 7 WHYCOCOMAGH

NS Cattle Producers Zone 1 Annual Meeting

JANUARY 8 STELLARTON

NS Cattle Producers Zone 2 Annual Meeting

JANUARY 8 BIBLE HILL

NS Cattle Producers Zone 4 Annual Meeting

JANUARY 9 BERWICK

NS Cattle Producers Zone 5 Annual Meeting

JANUARY 9 BRIDGEWATER

NS Cattle Producers Zone 6 Annual Meeting

JANUARY 10 WENTWORTH

NS Cattle Producers Zone 3 Annual Meeting

JANUARY 10 BIBLE HILL

Policy Development - Substance Use in the Workplace

JANUARY 16 & 17 TRURO

Dairy Farmers of NS Annual Meeting

JANUARY 19 BIBLE HILL

Maple Producers Association Annual Meeting

JAN 28 & 29 GREENWICH

Scotia Horticulture Congress

JAN 29 & 30 GREENWICH

NS Fruit Growers Association Annual Convention

FEBRUARY 12 CANADA

Canada's Agriculture Day

NSFA News & Views is the Newsletter of the NS Federation of Agriculture, the United, Strong & Caring Farm Organization representing the best interest of Nova Scotia's Agricultural Industry.

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News & Views is provided free of charge to its members. We value comments and concerns from our members. Please direct them to Executive members or the Office Staff.

STAFF: Executive Director: Henry Vissers; Associate Director: Wanda Hamilton; Financial Services Coordinator: Krista Vroegh; Administrative Services Coordinator: Shelly MacKenzie; Communication & Research Coordinator: Maxine MacLean; Member Engagement Coordinator: Kathrine Doyle; Farm Safety Manager, Carolyn Van Den Heuvel, EFP Staff, Paul Brenton, Trevor Davison, Jay Woodworth and Cory Roberts



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