

news+views

Vol. 32 Issue 3 May 2020

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Industry Battles Against COVID-19

While COVID-19 has only been on our radar for just over a month, the impact it is having on our industry is significant. We can all agree that ensuring public health and safety is paramount, but the reality is we also need government to start thinking about food security.

CFA President, Mary Robinson (@Agproudmary) took to Twitter on April 18 challenging the government, asking them if they had been given credible warning to invest in PPE three months prior to COVID-19 hitting Canada, would they have purchased it? Canadian farmers are giving the government the equivalent warning about domestic food security. Will food matter to the government only after it is too late?

The NSFA shares in these concerns and we continue to advocate on behalf of the industry, and our frustrations are rising along with yours. We know your farms are impacted and we know the stress of the unknown markets are real. We need you to know that we are working tirelessly on your behalf and continue to put forward recommendations to government to put programs in place to support your operations, and that they assure farmers that we will not take on the full risk of ensuring food security for our province.

The scope of the advocacy efforts over the past month are broad and we want to provide you with a brief overview of the key recommendations and requests made by NSFA on your behalf. This work

is ever-changing and continually evolving – as you read this article, there are very likely updates to this overview.

Order by the Medical Officer of Health

Ensuring that farms and the supply chain that our food supply depends on is deemed essential service and able to operate safely and effectively throughout the state of emergency is essential to the stability of our industry. The NSFA recommended that the term Registered Farms as defined by the Farm Registration Act be used within the Order by the Medical Officer under the list of exemptions relating to the 5-person rule and social distancing.

The NSFA also requested clarity around the definitions of agri-food and food processing plants to ensure that all aspects of the agriculture value chain can support the industry throughout the unprecedented times – from nutrient and seeds to processors to equipment dealers – all of these services are essential to ensuring food security for our province.

Business Risk Management

There have been several long-standing issues with the business risk management programs offered through the federal and provincial governments. These issues are only heightened as we face the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19, after two consecutive years of challenging cropping seasons. NSFA has made the following recommendations to government to enhance these programs.

Crop Insurance

NSFA recommends that NSDA, with support from the Nova Scotia Department of Finance and Treasury Board, cover the cost of crop insurance premiums for the

...continued on page 3

Viewpoint

As I write, we are still finding out the details of the horrific tragedy that has happened in Colchester County, the implication of which will be with us for many years and for some of us the rest of our lives. The other challenges we face are pale in comparison when we contemplate this loss for our neighbor's family, friends and community. This tragedy highlights again the importance of giving back to our community and being good to one another.

As Covid-19 continues, I am sure it will be a number of weeks before any of the restrictions will be lifted and even then, numerous restrictions will still be in place until we have a vaccine and can get back to any definition of normal. There has already been lots of supply chain disruptions with limits on the amount customers can buy at retail and the closure of slaughter facilities in other parts of Canada and the US because of Covid 19 outbreaks in the plants and the fear this causes in employees.

The Federal government has had daily announcements of support to date totaling \$115 billion, an unprecedented amount at lightning speed. Think about that amount of support, if you divide that among the population of Canada which is 38 million it's over \$3,000 a person for every citizen! There will be implications for this later, you can be sure.

This does come down to local challenges as well. In the name of efficiency, a number of processing plants in Nova Scotia have closed over the last 20 years including beef, pork, a pie plant and pea and bean facilities. In many cases, the rationale was efficiency of larger operations in province that then bought out the local facility.

We have been told over the years that with a few exceptions Nova Scotia is not in the commodity business and we aren't large enough to compete in that game. Local labels started to disappear

in stores and were replaced by store brand, generic and national labels that had no resonance for consumers. That made it pretty easy for shoppers to buy on price alone without thinking about the farm or business in their community. Indeed, many farmers were subject to the variances of market forces and were forced to compete on price only or not get space on the shelf. The mantra was, if you haven't got the volume we aren't interested and by the way, we will no longer take delivery at the store, you need to travel to the warehouse. This was all in the name of efficiency.

That has changed somewhat over the past few years with a resurgent interest in buy local as well as a renewed interest in the small farm lifestyle that has resulted in the increase in the number of small farms and farm markets in the province. There is also an interest from grocers in not only buying local but making sure that its recognized.

We now have an opportunity within the crisis to help consumers focus on the importance of agriculture and farms in their province and community. And for the consumer to see farmers as a part of the fabric of rural Nova Scotia. I haven't heard as much lately of people trying to drive a wedge in our community between different farming methods, there is more of an effort to do our best and celebrate our farms diversity.

The bigger piece for all farms is the discussion around a couple of issues, regardless of the size of the farming operation, they apply to everyone. How do farmers manage their risk, "you say you want me to grow this product and/or increase my capacity but I feel like I'm bearing all the risk". Second question is "will you still buy my product once this situation is over." It's fine to talk food security and sovereignty, that also means a continuation of support beyond this year and this crisis.



*Henry Vissers
Executive Director, Nova Scotia
Federation of Agriculture*

I believe we have an opportunity wrapped in this crisis, we will need to engage with our Nova Scotians in conversations to develop a new and deeper recognition of the value of supporting a local, resilient, and sustainable farm community in Nova Scotia.

Comments?
hvissers@nsfa-fane.ca

For Nova Scotia farmers seeking support —

Farm Family Support Line

A confidential, short-term counselling and advisory service — to help you manage and reduce the stresses in life, including mental health, legal, financial and more.

No cost for up to 3 hrs of service per issue.
If you require more specialized or longer-term support, professionals will help you find an appropriate specialist or community service that can provide continued assistance.

Line is open 24 hours a day —
Available to farmers or their immediate family members

1.844.880.9142

TTY: 1.877.338.0275

workhealthlife.com

**MORNEAU
SHEPELL**



*Farm Family Support Line
is managed by Morneau
Shepell as a Member
Assistance Program.*

Industry Battles Against COVID-19 *continued from page 1*

2020 growing seasons, providing farmers with a premium holiday to support the cashflow of their businesses.

In addition to the premium holiday, the NSFA recommends that farms demonstrating the inability to harvest a crop due to labour shortage still qualify for compensation through crop insurance.

Finally, farmers are often taking a risk planting their crops prior to the crop insurance planting dates. This is an unnecessary risk for farmers to take and program policy must allow for flexibility of planting dates to take into consideration the climate of different regions in the province. To ensure fair insurance options for all farmers, we are requesting reconsideration of planting dates for regions or the implementation of a date range.

AgriStability

AgriStability has the potential to be a good backstop program for eligible farms through COVID-19. AAFC and NSDA must agree to adjust the net income trigger to 85%. Additionally, AAFC must clarify that if a farm is unable to harvest the full planted crop due to inadequate labour capacity, their claim will not be reduced.

AgriInvest

AAFC must agree to an AgriInvest stimulus package, contributing a minimum of 5% of Allowable Net Sales without producer matching contributions.

Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board

The agriculture industry continues to be provided with access to more debt, but we know that we do not need more debt. We need payment deferrals with no penalties, we need access to operating cash, we need assurance from government that they have our back. The NSFA has submitted a proposal to NSDA to develop an Interest Paydown Program, like the program provided to the beef industry following BSE. This program would support the NSDA in honouring the Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board's mandate of fostering the development

of sustainable agriculture and agri-rural businesses in Nova Scotia through responsible lending.

We have also requested the internal cap that a Loan Officer is able to approve be increased to improve processing times to shorten the wait time between application and when the farm has access to funds.

Labour Challenges

With the borders closing to international travel and the uncertainty of markets impacting the industry, labour challenges have been among one of the most immediate challenges faced by the industry. The impact the border closure had on the arrival of temporary foreign workers in Nova Scotia is well-known. Each year, Nova Scotia farmers welcome approximately 1,500 workers from Jamaica, Mexico, and other Caribbean countries. While, these workers are now permitted to enter the country and the first wave of workers arrived the week of April 15th, these farmers have additional guidelines to comply with to ensure their workers follow a non-working self-isolation period of 14-days. The Federal government announced a \$1,500 per worker fund for farmers with TFWs; however, the details of this program have yet to be released.

The NSFA has submitted the request that these workers be covered under MSI and are protected in the event they require medical attention due to COVID-19. Currently, these workers are covered under a private insurer but with increased risk, it is essential that we ensure these workers who are contributing to our food security and our rural economy are properly covered while they are here. In addition to the challenges facing those farmers with TFWs, we know that decrease in sales and impact to markets have farmers concerned about their ability to afford their labour. Many farms qualify for the 10% wage subsidy offered by the Federal government, but very few, if any, are eligible for the 75% wage subsidy. In addition to cost

of labour, the ability to find workers for the season is becoming more and more difficult for farmers. To help address the labour shortage, we have established an nsajobs.ca portal under our AgSector Program, further information on this portal can be found on page 10. We also continue to advocate for wage subsidy programs to support our farmers through this time.

Processing Capacity

Without significant local processing capacity and a change in market demands from the restaurant market to table market, farms are facing significant processing challenges. While many of these challenges are dealt with by commodity groups, NSFA is aware of the situation and continues to bring forth these challenges to government.

There are several additional advocacy efforts put forward by NSFA over the past month including the recommendation to lift spring weight restrictions early for agriculture related travel, access to burn permits during the newly implemented burn ban, along with others.

While this article by no means gives you the full picture of the advocacy done on your behalf nor does it provide you with the assurances you are looking for, know that the NSFA continues to be your voice to ensure government understands the essential role you play in getting food to our tables.

Public Trust Training Workshop- Postponed

The Heart-to-Heart Communications training that was scheduled for April 1, 2020 has been postponed and will be offered at a later date. In the meantime, podcasts have been developed and will be available on the NSFA website soon! Be sure to watch the e-news on Fridays for the release!

Policy Corner

It goes without saying that our lives have taken a shift and a lot like everything else at NSFA these days, policy isn't any different. Some areas shifted to immediate urgency while others were put on the back burner or canceled altogether. As NSFA adjusts to a "new normal", how we do policy will shift as well.

Agricultural Land

Land protection goals

If you've been following the Ecological Goals and Sustainable Prosperities Act, you'll know that EGSPA was repealed and replaced with Sustainable Development and Prosperities Act (SDPA). Our Agricultural Land Policy has a priority to lobby government for goals written in legislation to protect at minimum 5000 acres of agricultural land. The SDPA was the avenue that NSFA was looking at to fill this objective. The Act is written to allow the development of regulations that will identify targets for "sustainable development" in Nova Scotia. This is a change from EGSPA in that the goals were written in the Act itself, which is much more challenging to change. Nonetheless, our current avenue for pressing government to commit to protecting agricultural land is the regulation for the Sustainable Development and Prosperity Act. These consultations were rolled out to take place this Spring throughout Nova Scotia. There were in person consultations, online Facebook events and a survey. These were cancelled. Now we continue to wait for our opportunity.

As a non-COVID update, one of NSFA's last meetings was the Canadian Federation of Agriculture AGM in February. At the meeting NSFA presented a resolution requesting Canada Revenue Agency to develop a program compensating

farmers for the removal of development rights via easement through a program comparable to the EcoGifts programs for nature reserves. This resolution passed and NSFA is looking forward to supporting CFA on this file.

Regulatory Burden

The SPDA isn't the only legislation that was up for consultation this year. The government was expected to look for input on the Traffic Safety Regulations, Biodiversity Act and Municipal Planning, either by now or in the coming months. Purely speculative, but the government could shift this to online; however, they are acutely aware of the limited internet throughout the province.

On the internet note, amid the COVID-19 updates, the provincial government dedicated an additional \$15m to speed up expansion of high-speed internet throughout Nova Scotia. This has been an ask of Nova Scotia farmers for a very long time – the ability to modernize sales platforms, market and more is important for farms and any business. As the government shifted education from traditional classrooms and many employees to working remotely at home, it's probably safe to assume that they became aware of the inconvenience of poor internet. NSFA will continue to monitor the benefit of this and existing funds.

Labour

From a policy perspective, there isn't much to be updated on the labour file. NSFA heavily focused on the implications that COVID-19 is having/will have on the labour needs in agriculture. Detailed updates on this are throughout this newsletter.

As a reminder, minimum wage increased to \$12.55 starting April 1st and the partial hour rule has been removed.

Soil

It seems as though soil health continues to be pushed to the back burner. NSFA developed a plan to bring together farmers for a day on soil health. The morning was to be dedicated to a specific topic to soil health on the farm and the afternoon was targeted to determining what NSFA should be working towards on our soil health policy. Watch our eNews and future editions of the News and Views to see how we pivot our approach to identifying soil health outcomes.

Resolutions

COVID-19 has influenced resolutions differently. As was mentioned earlier, the funding for high speed internet has increased with expectations that we will see improved access much sooner. Here's how some of the other resolutions are playing out.

Programs

We theme our resolutions to align which NSFA committee or government department they should be directed to. As was updated in the last News and Views, the programs resolutions from the 2019 AGM were presented to Minister Colwell. We haven't had feedback from government on these potential changes and based on the recently released 2020 programs, the requested changes weren't made. NSFA will continue working towards changes to programs as presented in these resolutions.

Changes to the BRM programs are being heavily focused on right now amidst COVID-19. NSFA has supported CFA's requests to increase AgriStability to 85% and improvements to AgriInvest including an ask of 5% of Annual Net Sales without producer matching contributions. These asks aren't new for NSFA, but COVID-19 presented an opportunity to emphasize the importance of these changes using the potential of national food insecurity

Policy Corner *continued from page 4*

as our rationale; we are in a very real position where food may not be available to be imported and certainly not to the extent that it was in recent past.

Trespassing on farms

The request of this legislation change is in response to activists on farms. NSFA requested that NSDA explore improving provincial trespassing legislation to support farmers experiencing challenges with trespassers and activists. General opinion at the Department of Agriculture is that the legislation is strong enough, however, NSFA would like at the very least guidance documents on how the legislation applies to activists targeting farms and other livestock facilities such as sale yards. These guidance documents would be used by enforcement officers and would cover basic biosecurity and how the laws apply to activists on farms. Most protests reported in Nova Scotia are related to livestock; however, based on trends in our neighbouring provinces, cropping isn't relieved from protesting near farms. While it hasn't been explicitly indicated, with NSDA's work in COVID-19 and TFW policies on farms, NSFA expects

that this topic isn't currently a high priority for the department at this time.

On a related note, a private member's bill was put forward at the federal level with changes to the Animal Health Act that allows prosecution of persons who enter onto farms with or without consent of the farmer and who potentially compromise the health of the livestock. This was recently put forward, but with the closure of the House, it is expected that this Bill will be delayed. For those questioning the value of Private Member's Bills, it's worth it to remember the make up of our Federal Government; in a minority situation, Private Members' Bills can gain traction with support from third parties.

Procurement

COVID-19 is playing an interesting role with regards to local procurement. More than before our provincial government sees the need for employment on farm and has demonstrated support of Temporary Foreign Workers coming into Nova Scotia. It's still evident that more needs to be done to get local food into institutions, but the food security message is certainly getting across during COVID-19.

NSFA has a seat at the Halifax Food Policy Alliance Steering Committee. Part of NSFA's position at the table is to focus on procurement policies. Our position is even more important as The HRM Council approved dedicated funding for a Food Action Plan in Halifax Municipality. Community Engagement will be a key component of this action plan; watch for opportunities to have your say in how "farmers feed cities".

How NSFA does policy...

It's fairly common knowledge that NSFA has lots of meetings – internal committee meetings, affiliation meetings and meetings with government officials and staff to present our perspective on a presented topic. Changes to how these meetings take place are inevitable at this time. As we continue to commit to our mission and vision you will see NSFA shift to more online conferencing and teleconferencing to ensure we stay on track to meet our goals and address farmers' issues. Policy is known to be a slow moving beast, and NSFA will do our part to make sure distancing doesn't impact our results and normal activity.

FCC's response to COVID-19

This is an unsettling time as the world grapples with the health and economic impacts of COVID-19. As you work to prioritize the health and well-being of your families, farms and businesses, please know that Farm Credit Canada (FCC) is here for you.

As part of the Government of Canada's plan to support the economy, FCC has received an enhancement to its capital base that will allow for an additional \$5 billion in lending capacity. To ensure producers, agribusinesses and food processors can remain focused on business-critical functions, rather than worrying about how to access funds to keep operating through this challenging

period, FCC has put customer support programs in place.

These programs include:

- a deferral of principal and interest payments up to six months for existing loans; or
- a deferral of principal payments up to 12 months
- access to an additional credit line up to \$500,000, secured by general security agreements or universal movable hypothec (Québec only)

Please note: FCC is a lending organization. We do not provide grants or interest-free loans. Normal lending due

diligence will be taken on all applications.

If you'd like more information on these options or on how FCC can help improve your financial position, please contact your [local office](#) or the Customer Service Centre at 1-888-332-3301 for further details.

FCC has been a partner to the agriculture and food industry for more than 60 years. We serve as a strong and stable presence and have a history of supporting our customers through challenging times. That time is now, and we're here.



Farm Safety NS Update

As the last of the snow melts with the warmer weather, chicks continue to hatch, livestock animals continue to be born, livestock are moved out to pasture or to a different pasture, fields are worked to get crops in the ground, trees are pruned, the list goes on.

COVID-19 Resources

This spring is a little different from the others. As the province is in a state of emergency to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, we are isolating and distancing ourselves as well as disinfecting everything that we touch. This changes how we practice farming and get our day to day tasks completed. We have been working tirelessly over the last few weeks so you will have the resources you need to safely continue your work on the farm. Visit the Farm Safety Nova Scotia Website www.farmsafetyns.ca/covid-19 Here you will find Farm Safety Plan supplemental resources, personal and facility hygiene resources, posters and signs, what to do if a worker is sick, as well as customer drop-off and on-farm delivery procedures. Feel free to download and use these resources as your own making the necessary adjustments to suit your farming practices. There are resources also available in Spanish.

Online Training Available

With social distancing, we are using our electronic devices a bit more. One way to put the device to work and train workers at the same time is to take advantage of the online training Farm Safety Nova Scotia now has available on the website. There are currently four courses: WHMIS 2015 and Intro to Farm Safety in English and Spanish. By the end of April, Road Safety and Animal Handling will be added. These courses are available

for a limited time for free. Each course tests the user's knowledge of the course material and a certificate is generated after the Wrap Up quiz is complete.

Visit <https://farmsafetyns.ca/available-courses/> to enroll in your free course today.

Building a Farm Safety Plan in your spare time!

As we are confined to our homes, there is an opportunity to spend the time building a farm safety plan. All of the resources are available on the Farm Safety Nova Scotia website at <https://farmsafetyns.ca/farm-safety-plan/guide-to-farm-safety-plan/>. If your internet is limited, you can call 902-893-2293 or e-mail lbrookhouse@nsfa-fane.ca to order a printed copy or USB copy of the Farm Safety Plan. These resources will be soon available at the Dal AC library as part of their resource collection. The library will have printed copies of the Farm Safety Plan Guide and Farm Safety Plan Workbook as well as the USB. Feel free to use the templates as your own and make the adjustments as need for your farm specific operations.

Farm Safety Plan for Fruit Growers

During the winter months, the Farm Safety Advisor spent some time visiting apple farms in the valley to evaluate the activities most commonly performed on farm. From the visits, a comprehensive farm safety plan was developed specifically for the Nova Scotia Fruit Grower's Association and their members. The plan is available to all members of the fruit grower's association on USB. Contact the Nova Scotia Fruit Growers Association for your copy. If we are released from isolation in the summer months, the Farm Safety Advisor plans to visit Christmas Tree farms to develop similar resources specific to the commodity.

On-Farm Advisory Services

If you would like to have a Farm Safety Plan built specifically for your farm, on-farm advisory services are also available. The Farm Safety Advisor will come to your farm for a free consult and evaluate your needs. From there, a farm safety plan can be built in consultation with the farm. Phone call 902-893-2293 or e-mail lbrookhouse@nsfa-fane.ca to request your on-farm advisory services.

Don't forget to charge your battery.

Dr. Howatt, President of Howatt HR Consulting, believes being in isolation for 2 weeks will greatly diminish our mental health, let alone for an unknown number of months. He says, "we are like batteries, and like batteries we can be anywhere from charged to empty on a daily basis."

Personal and situational stressors can drain your battery such as stress, burnout, anxiety, harassment, chronic issues, gossip, workload, distrust, depression, injuries, and incidents.

Intentionally recharging your battery by prioritizing sleep, being active, eating fruits and vegetables and finding a connection rather than self-medicating needs to be a priority.

In the coming weeks, follow us on Facebook and Twitter to learn micro skills on keeping your battery charged. So far we have touched on gratitude and the importance of a social connection.

Soil Testing

Soils are the foundation on which our agricultural cropping systems are built. They provide physical structure for roots, store and provide access to water and air. They act as a bank for nutrients to be held and released. They support an ecosystem of organisms that can capture nitrogen, store carbon and cycle nutrients.

Soil testing methods offer meaningful measures which can be used for making good management decisions; increasing productivity, making more efficient use of inputs and reducing environmental pollution. It is unlikely that the best fertility decisions will be made without regular soil testing. By way of analogy, cropping without testing your soil is similar to navigating without a map. You need to know where you are before you can orient yourself towards where you want to be.

The NSDA Analytical Lab offers soil testing services. Registered farms receive a 50% discount on the price per sample. The standard field soil test measures plant available nutrient levels, organic matter, pH and lime requirement. Reports also offer basic fertilizer recommendations for specific crops. The lab has modified its sample receiving protocols as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic so be sure to get the most up to date information from the lab (902) 893-7444 prior to submitting your samples (link below).

Nova Scotia has naturally acidic soils and high levels of precipitation. As a result, nutrients (e.g. calcium) are continually being leached from our soils. We need to regularly replenish nutrients and increase pH to maintain fertility. The Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture delivers the Limestone Trucking Assistance Program to help offset the cost of transporting limestone to your farm (link below). A recent soil analysis report or a current

Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) are required to access the program.

NSFA members voted at the 2019 AGM on a Standing Policy that prioritizes lobbying for supports to ensure healthy soils across Nova Scotia. In addition to this, a resolution giving the Federation a mandate to lobby specifically for increased support for soil health testing in the province. These are both signals that farmers are increasingly aware of the importance of improving the health of the soil to increase productivity and resilience.

A healthy soil has a balance of good chemical, physical and biological properties that, together, contribute to an ideal environment for healthy plant growth. The PEI Analytical Lab now offers a soil health package as a part of their soil testing offerings (link below). The methods used expand on the traditional soil tests to include measures such as soil texture (sand, silt, clay content), total carbon and nitrogen, wet aggregate stability (the resilience of the soil structure to damage e.g. through cultivation or rainfall), microbial activity (the overall biological activity in the soil measured by how much carbon dioxide is produced), active carbon (the fraction of organic matter that is readily available for decomposition and nutrient release), biological nitrogen supply (this test developed by Dr. Burton's lab at Dal AC is a measure of the ability of a soil to supply nitrogen from decomposing organic matter in the soil). These soil health measures can give an indication of the overall health of your soils and if tracked regularly can show the impact your management practices are having on soil health over time.

Soil testing should be done at least once every three years or more often in high value crops or on fields with excessive nutrients. Your soil test is only as good as the sample that is taken. It is important to take representative samples, mix them

well and follow instructions from the lab to ensure accurate repeatable results.

Resources:

- **The EFP office has soil probes available for borrowing; call the office: (902) 893-2293**
- **Limestone Trucking Assistance Program**
 - o <https://novascotia.ca/programs/limestone-trucking-assistance/>
- **NSDA lab**
 - o <https://novascotia.ca/agri/programs-and-services/lab-services/analytical-lab/>
 - o How to Take a Field Soil Sample <https://novascotia.ca/agri/documents/lab-services/analytical-lab-howto-soiltest.pdf>
 - o Understanding the Soil Test Report <https://novascotia.ca/agri/documents/lab-services/analytical-lab-understand-soil.pdf>
- **Soil Health**
 - o PEI Analytical Lab
 - o <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/agriculture-and-land/pei-analytical-laboratories-peial>
 - o PEI Soil Health Test - How to Interpret Your Results <https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/agriculture-and-land/pei-soil-health-test-how-interpret-your-results>
 - o Comprehensive Assessment of Soil Health – Cornell Framework <http://www.css.cornell.edu/extension/soil-health/manual.pdf>

Meet Your Farmer Updates

Covid-19 and the Food System

I've been seeing a lot of food related posts on social media. Some are positive, some of concern and fear, and some that are just plain negative. I know that you as farmers are dealing with new markets, increased pressure, a general lack of understanding from some of the public on how food goes from farm to fork. When putting a public trust lens on what's happening, it's important to keep in mind that trust is built on a framework around creating connections. It's "Doing the Right Thing", "Trusted Assurance/Verification Systems, and "Communication". All while being transparent and continuously improving. A lack of understanding leaves people to fill in the blanks with their own opinions or media and other influences. Food is a hot topic with media and it's a confusing narrative right now. If the public or consumers turn to you with questions please take the time to answer them openly, honestly, and without judgement. It's hard to say whether this pandemic situation will increase or decrease trust in the food system and at what levels. But as farmers- I know this rings true "I can tell you that every producer in this province is very concerned about producing food for us, Nova Scotians, and not exporting it anywhere. We have a duty to our fellow citizens and to our province to provide them with food at this time." -Chris de Waal. As farmers, this is tough, but we will get through it together. -Janette

County Federation Resources

County Federations of Agriculture will soon be able to access new resources from Meet Your Farmer for their members and community organizations. New trivia wheels, Plinko boards, and corn hole games have been ordered and supporting resources developed. Bingo!



Shown above are resources available to County Federations and community organizations and can be customizable to your event.



and colouring sheets are also available. These games are customizable to your event. You can include your logo, pictures of farms and farmers, and decide what prizes or trivia you use. These will be great to use at exhibitions, schools, community events, farm tours, etc. Additional sets are available from the NSFA office and can be requested for use if your County Federation set is booked.

Strategic Planning Update

Work is well underway with the strategic plan for Public Trust! Wait- don't skip down through the article- this is an important piece of work and one we are very excited about. There is a draft of the plan being reviewed by staff and the Public Trust Working Group. Once this is complete, a final version will be created with supporting communications to take to you and all of our food system partners. This is a plan for the whole food system in Nova Scotia, not just farmers so there is a lot of work to be done to build relationships to work on the goals from the plan.

What we can share so far is that this is 25-year piece of work with this plan as the starting gate and first length of the track. Our workplan for Public Trust is focused on the strategic plan so the next few years will continue to see Meet Your Farmer events but will be focused identifying Public Trust Champions and getting a team in place that is representative of the whole food system- that means input suppliers, distributors, dieticians, chefs, academia, NGO's, government and more! This strategic plan is a living document and will really form the work we do!

Sustainability on Farm Videos

Meet Your Farmer was pleased to visit with Dean and Catherine Manning of Manning Family Farm and with Greg and Suzanne Gerrits of ElmrIDGE farm to talk about sustainability on their farms. Zest Media Productions created two great videos that will be up on our YouTube Channel soon! You will also be seeing these great farmers in upcoming communications from NSFA and Meet Your Farmer.

We are always looking for new farms to catch on video. If this interests you send Janette an email: jmcdonald@nsfa-fane.ca



Shown above are Greg and Suzanne Gerrits of ElmrIDGE Farm



Shown above are Dean and Catherine Manning of Manning Family Farm

Canadian Federation of Agriculture and COVID-19

In response to COVID-19, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) has been working feverishly to collect information from the Canadian agriculture sector on the impacts of the virus, as well as lobbying the federal government to make sure agriculture gets the support it needs during these difficult times.

CFA has been conducting weekly surveys (now scheduled to bi-weekly) to both its membership organizations as well as individual farmers across Canada. These surveys have helped CFA stay informed on what is happening at the ground level, as well as keep an eye on the bigger picture. To take part in these surveys, visit CFA's website.

Engagement in these surveys is critical to help keep CFA up-to-date as they participate in thrice-weekly calls with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, where they identify current and upcoming problems and work towards solutions with the Federal Government.

Labour and Temporary Foreign Workers

CFA, along with its members, stakeholders and partner organizations throughout the food supply chain, identified a looming labour crisis when borders began to close. Working together, they lobbied the government to ensure that farmers and food processors could still access Temporary Foreign Workers (TFW).



CFA President Mary Robinson and UPA President Marcel Groleau answer questions from the media during CFA's Virtual Press Conference on April 16th.

After these efforts the government guaranteed that TFWs could enter the country. More recently, the government announced \$50 million to fund the isolation period these workers must now go through before they can begin working.

Virtual Press Conference and Food Security

On April 16th, CFA held a Virtual Press Conference entitled Domestic Food Supply Needs to be the Biggest Government Priority, Following Healthcare, in Fight Against COVID-19, which you can watch on CFA's YouTube Channel. This conference was sponsored by Food and Consumer Products of Canada.

During the conference, CFA President Mary Robinson, outlined the impacts of COVID-19 on Canadian agriculture and how those could affect every Canadian's food security, and also gave the following recommendations on how to support the sector:

- An Emergency Preparedness Fund to assist farmers in dealing with expenses and obstacles from COVID-19.
- To fix Business Risk Management programs so that they are responsive to farmer's needs.

- To help farmers and food processors access personal protective equipment to keep them and their staff safe.
- To develop a program to incentivize unemployed Canadians to work on farms.

This conference was well received, being covered by every national media outlet in Canada. Over 25 media interviews followed the press conference, and Trudeau was asked a question in regards to support for Canadian farmers by a reporter in his daily address.

Through these efforts and more CFA continues to work for Canadian farmers. CFA is currently diverting every resource to ensure that all Canadian farmers get through this pandemic with as little negative impact as possible.

NSFA weekly E-news

The NSFA sends out a weekly enews with updates for the farming community. As well as these weekly updates, it is the best way to stay up to date on the present COVID-19 situation, available programs, NSFA advocacy efforts, etc.

If you do not already receive our weekly enews you can subscribe by clicking the link on our website www.nsfa-fane.ca or emailing kdoyle@nsfa-fane.ca.



AgSector Update

As we kick off the 2020 season, things look quite different this year. Not only are we taking extra precautions to ensure our health and the health of our loved ones, we are also faced with challenges that are unique to the situation at hand. Farms are having to adapt their practices, make adjustments to processes and machinery – all in the interest of public health.

One challenge, that isn't new to our farms this year but will indeed be magnified, is the labour shortage we face. According to the 2017 LMI data collected by the Canadian Agricultural Human Resources Council, Nova Scotia agriculture employed over 6,500 workers – including 1,500 Temporary Foreign Workers – and even still, we experienced a labour gap of 250 jobs. As you will read in this edition of the News & Views, NSFA along with our national counterparts CFA, and provincial colleagues; Perennia and the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, have been working tirelessly on the Temporary Foreign Worker file. While workers have slowly begun to arrive in the province – we expect a significant labour gap this year compared to years previous.

In an effort to help lessen the labour gap that Nova Scotia farms will experience this year especially, we have launched three new pieces on the NSFA website. First, is a page for farms to post job availability on their operations. All you have to do is answer all the necessary questions and a job description will be formulated. After being reviewed by NSFA staff, it will be posted on the newly developed job board on the NSFA website. The second piece as mentioned above, is our new job board. This board will house all of the incoming

job postings for farms and agricultural related businesses. The third piece is an employee registration, where potential employees can fill out a registration form highlighting their skills and location. Jobs in their area will then be emailed to them. To learn more, or to post your own job openings please visit: nsagjobs.ca!

We encourage you to submit any openings you have on your operations, as the information gathered will also support our advocacy on the labour gap and challenges in filling that gap.

Our hope is that this job board and the promotion of job opportunities in agriculture will help inspire our fellow Nova Scotians to consider a career in agriculture.

Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council (CAHRC)

NSFA receives AgriLMI data from CAHRC – AgriLMI is a program focused on assessing the current agricultural labour market, projecting the future supply and demand for agricultural workers, and recommending potential solutions to the sector's labour issues. This data provides us with additional insights and assists our advocacy efforts for the labour gap in Nova Scotia. The stats provided above come from CAHRC's LMI data.

CAHRC also has a number of great resources at your disposal. Not only are they constantly uploading new content to their COVID-19 resource page, they have an FAQ on COVID-19 and a number

of resources and informative tips that can be found on their website.

Another great resource is their AgriHR Toolkit which is designed to address the unique needs of the agriculture industry. Based on years of research and field testing conducted in Canada and internationally, this toolkit offers everything you need to improve your people-management skills and develop key resources to help you find, retain, and support your employees. Topics covered in this toolkit include:

- Recruitment, Selection and Hiring
- Compensation and Benefits
- Worker Performance
- Succession Planning
- Workforce Planning
- HR Policies
- Health and Safety
- Workplace Wellness
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Foreign Workers

NSFA members are able to access the AgriHR Toolkit at no cost by using the discount code: NSFA2020.

Just a reminder, labour is provincially regulated so we encourage farmers to refer to the NS Labour Standards Code to ensure provincial compliance. Specifically in relation to the "Health and Safety" section of the AgriHR Toolkit, we encourage farmers to use our robust "Guide to Your Farm Safety Plan." farmsafetyns.ca, which we can guarantee meets the NS Occupational Health and Safety Act and regulations.





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MEMBERS

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Mark's Commercial is excited to offer the NS Federation of Agriculture Membership employees the following 10% discount code redeemable at marks.com:

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While Mark's stores across Canada remain closed until further notice to stem the spread of COVID-19 and to protect our employees, customers and community, we remain open on marks.com. We recognize our clients require access to purchase industrial, health wear and safety apparel, footwear and accessories necessary to keep employees safe and comfortable on the job during this critical time.

- Employees will receive 10% off items purchased online at marks.com
- Mark's eCommerce business remains open to fulfill online orders
- Mark's distribution remains open to meet increased demand
- Our carrier partners remain open to ship orders across Canada

Nova Scotia Young Farmers - #HowNSAgs Contest

Back for another year, Nova Scotia Young Farmers are excited to roll out their 2020 edition of the #HowNSAgs photo contest. Let's brighten some news feeds with what's going on in NS Agriculture!

Chance to win a \$100 gift certificate to [Irwin Lake Chalets - Nova Scotia](#).

Contest Rules:

1. Photo submissions will be accepted from the following platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter.
2. Photos must use the hashtag #HowNSAgs.
3. Photos must be set to Public so that NSYF can locate all contest entries.



#HOWNSAGS

Are you involved in agriculture in NS?

FARMER
EMPLOYEE
LENDER
GOVERNMENT
PROCESSOR
TRANSPORT
INDUSTRY SUPPORT

Snap a photo of YOUR agriculture
Post to Facebook, Instagram or Twitter using #HowNSAgs
For a chance to win a \$100 gift certificate to
Irwin Lake Chalets!

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Irwin Lake Chalets

Multiple photos per person encouraged, however only one contest entry per person
Winner will be selected at random
Contest closes May 31, 2020
For more information contact nsyoungfarmers@gmail.com

4. Multiple photos per person is allowed, but only one contest submission will be entered.

5. Contest closes May 31, 2020.

6. Winner will be selected at random.

For more information please contact:
nsyoungfarmers@gmail.com

Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board

The Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board remains committed to keeping clients informed about actions we're taking to support you during this time. We continue to be here to help you through the current market.

Many things are changing, but we know you need cash flow to keep operating. We are making important adjustments that work for you including the option to defer upcoming payments.

Please note, most of our staff are working from their home, however you can still reach a loan officer during normal business hours by phone or email. You can also contact the main line at 902-893-6506/902-896-4800 to have your call directed. We are keeping our website up to date: <https://novascotia.ca/farmloan/>

Upcoming Events

September 20, 2020 - Various NS Locations

Open Farm Day

December 3 & 4, 2020 - Truro

125th NSFA Annual Meeting

Introducing “Friends of the NSFA”

As you all know, we are always in a constant state of change, things are never exactly the same as they were the day before. Because of this, we wanted to develop a program that would meet your changing needs. This program is targeted at those who are no longer able to register a farm but want to stay connected with the work NSFA is doing on behalf of industry, or those who are no longer actively farming and want to stay in the loop.

As our friend you would receive:

- A membership card
- Each edition of the News & Views for the membership year
- Access to training opportunities and discounts through NSFA programs
- Access to select member benefits

Our “Friends of the NSFA” program is a yearly \$75 membership. If you’re interested in being our friend, or if you have any questions, please contact:

Katherine Doyle
Communications Coordinator
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(902) 893-2293



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Tim Marsh
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Website: www.nsfa-fane.ca

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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.

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.