

news+views

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Executive Director Announces Retirement and Transition



Henry Vissers grew up on a farm in the small community of Newcombville, and now resides in Valley, just outside of Bible Hill.

Henry has been involved in agriculture all his life; from growing up on the farm, managing the local Co-Op, being involved in organizations like 4-H, the local county federation, and the exhibition.

For the past 12 years, Henry has been a great asset to the Federation and to Nova Scotia agriculture as a whole. Leading our advocacy and government relations efforts, securing us a forever home, the list of his accomplishments during his time with us is lengthy.

"Some of my favourite moments are around the people that I have met over the years. Our AGM was always a great place to connect with people that I don't see very often. I, of course know many of the people in the Senate Club, so it was always fun to catch up with them as well," said Henry.

"Our summer Council and Executive meetings were always great too, especially when we got to travel around the province. I always enjoyed meeting with the local farm community, touring a few of the local farms, and kicking back a bit. I've had the chance to travel a bit throughout the province and have been to all of the provinces through National meetings," he added.

"We would like to thank Henry for his leadership and the significant contributions he has made to the industry both provincially and nationally," said Tim Marsh, President of NSFA.

"It has been my pleasure to serve as Executive Director of the NSFA for the past 12 plus years, it has been the highlight of my career. Thank you all for your support of me and our wonderful organization," Henry added.

Please join us in congratulating Henry Vissers, Executive Director, on his upcoming retirement in November following our 126th Annual Meeting.

Henry's looking forward to being on less of a schedule and having the chance to unwind a bit. He's also not planning on doing many evening and weekend meetings either! Henry and Michele plan to travel a bit once the pandemic is over, the Netherlands and Scotland are on the top of their list!

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Viewpoint

It's budget time again, for both our federal and provincial governments. Both have been spending money without a budget for quite awhile sating the damage of the pandemic and the need to get money out the door quickly. They didn't have much choice in that, and it looks like they haven't burned the furniture. For now, deficits are popular, and the focus is on the percentage of GDP rather than net debt.

For both budgets the theme is heavily weighted on environment, with Nova Scotia announcing incentives for the purchase of Electric Vehicles (EVs) along with commitments to get off coal etc. There was not much change in the agriculture budget itself, it's a bit lower than last year - reflecting the end of Building Tomorrow Fund - at \$40.6 million dollars, it's now one of the smaller departments. Especially after food inspection moved to the Department of Environment and Climate Change a few years ago and funding for Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture now coming through the Labour & Advanced Education budget. Here is a link to the document for those interested: <https://beta.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/7-2634/estimates-and-supplementary-detail-budget-2021-2022-en.pdf>

With a staff complement of 169, most of the budget is salaries and the provincial share of the CAP agreement. 4-H is also now a line item with the organization now responsible for leveraging the funding to staff and delivering the 4-H program to membership.

Federally, it's still a pandemic budget focused on the "Build Back Better" message. The budget document shows a deficit of \$354 billion for last year and a projected budget deficit of \$154 billion (that's a lot of zeros, \$154,000,000,000) for this year and \$30 billion for the following year (2022).

The feds are ramping up climate

initiatives as well, with \$200 million for on farm climate action under the Agricultural Climate Solutions Program. They are also committing an additional billion to the Canada Universal Broadband Fund to speed up the rollout of broadband across Canada. The budget also contains \$57.6 million in funding for the extension of support of the mandatory TFW isolation. The budget does not contain a response to the request to enhance BRM programing beyond the removal of RML announced earlier. Further changes to the program are probably now going to wait for the next Policy Framework negotiations that start this fall.

An interesting part of the budget was the creation of a new Canada Water Agency, it's a small amount of money relative to the budget at \$17.4 million and it's based within Environment and Climate Change Canada. However, it is expected to be the successor to PFRA and will be the lead agency in managing water resources.

Here's the statement:

"Budget 2021 proposes to provide \$17.4 million over two years, starting in 2021-22, to Environment and Climate Change Canada to support work with the provinces, territories, Indigenous peoples, and key stakeholders on the scope of the agency's mandate, including identifying opportunities to build and support more resilient water and irrigation infrastructure. The agency would be headquartered outside the National Capital Region."

Another program that we have struggled with in the past is the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements. It has been a struggle to trigger payments from this program in the past when we have had legitimate disasters, like the recent hurricane or after the flooding a few years back. The new federal budget states, *"the budget proposes to provide \$1.9 billion over five years, on a cash basis, starting in 2021-22, to Public Safety Canada to support provincial and territorial disaster response and recovery efforts."*



Henry Vissers
Executive Director, Nova Scotia
Federation of Agriculture

Here's hoping this new funding will improve access and make it more effective.

It's a massive document at 739 pages but you can find it here: <https://www.budget.gc.ca/2021/report-rapport/toc-tdm-en.html>

As they continue to roll out the details of the budget, we do see that there are significant supports for on farm environment investments and positioning agriculture for the green economy.

Lastly, as we head into the busy season, I want to wish you well.

Comments?
hvissers@nsfa-fane.ca

Retirement & Transition

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To ensure a seamless transition, the NSFA Council struck the Executive Director Search Committee. The committee contracted the services of Royer-Thompson to conduct a succession review to start us off, as well as complete a leadership assessment within the organization.

With that review and assessment now complete, we are excited to announce that Carolyn Van Den Heuvel will be assuming the role of Executive Director upon Henry's retirement in November.



Carolyn Van Den Heuvel grew up on a beef farm in Antigonish, and currently resides in Truro Heights. She graduated from the Nova Scotia Agricultural College in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture. Following graduation, she worked on a number of dairy farms before starting her career with the Federation.

Carolyn officially started with the NSFA in 2013; however, she began working in the office in 2012 on a joint project with NSFA and the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association.

Good, bad or indifferent, Carolyn has never left the agriculture industry. Growing up on a farm, she always had a passion for agriculture. While studying

at the NSAC she knew one thing – she wanted to work in the agriculture industry, at the producer level, in a capacity that helped the industry progress.

“I am looking forward to working with our team here at NSFA – both governance and staff teams. We have a great group of people working in the best interest of Nova Scotia farmers and I am honoured to lead the organization into the future.”

Carolyn has played a critical role in our outreach, member relations and program delivery over her eight years at NSFA, and we look forward to the years to come with her at the helm.

“We have definitely had a rough couple of years in agriculture – from frost/freeze, hurricanes and a global pandemic – but the opportunities that lie ahead for the industry are exciting. We are seeing a new appreciation of food and agriculture from both the public and the government. The diversity of the agriculture industry in Nova Scotia is what allows us to stand out and there are opportunities to capitalize on with our diversity and our ability to collaborate.”

Henry and Carolyn will be working together on this transition over the coming months. We will be celebrating Henry and the contribution he has made to the Federation as his retirement date approaches – keep an eye out for details in the coming months.

We ask that you join us in congratulating Carolyn on her new role, and thanking Henry for his years of dedication to Nova Scotia's agriculture industry. We wish you all the best in retirement!



Policy Corner

The Next Agriculture Policy Framework

As we work our way towards the outline for the next Agriculture Policy Framework, we are seeking feedback from our members. In March, we held a round table discussion with members to understand their priority projects in the coming years and how they fit within the current framework. If they didn't, we had discussion around what needed to be changed in order for them to fit.

NSFA, with input from our Risk Management Committee, have developed a survey for members to have their say in this high-level statement. With the next policy framework anticipated to start in April 2023, we expect this statement to be released later this year. This framework will direct the funding programs and initiatives that will take place from 2023-2028.

NSFA invites members, agriculture organizations, and county federations to provide input into NSFA's submission on the next Agriculture Policy Framework. The survey can be found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/9QYDPTS>. If you have any questions, or want to talk through some of your concerns, please contact Maxine at mmaclean@nsfa-fane.ca

How's Your Internet?

These days, one would be hard pressed to find a meeting where internet quality, availability, and pricing aren't talked about. In saying that, NSFA is keeping an eye on the projects that were funded under Develop Nova Scotia.

What are we talking about? In 2020, the Nova Scotia Government invested more money into Develop Nova Scotia. Develop Nova Scotia is a crown corporation (aka – a business that is arms length from government) with a mandate to provide high quality internet access to over 95% of Nova Scotians. The projects

funded with the money are expected to be wrapped up by no later than this time next year.

We want to hear from you! We've created a quick survey to understand any recent or anticipated improvements to internet service in your area. With this information, we can do our own bench marking to make sure Nova Scotia farmers have the communications infrastructure needed to run their farm.

Watch our eNews for the release of this survey!

Biodiversity Act

"Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made." – Otto von Bismarck.

The Biodiversity Act made it through the legislature, but not without excitement. Without getting into great detail of the events leading up to it, Bill 4 did pass third reading, but was barely recognizable compared to the version that was tabled. The version of Bill 4 that passed was stripped of reference to private lands and associated penalties. This means the Biodiversity Act, when acclaimed, will allow Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forestry to establish Management Zones on Crown Lands. What this means isn't entirely known as details need to be flushed out in Regulations.

Impatiently Awaiting an Election Call

As we near the one-year mark from when a provincial election must be held here in Nova Scotia, we're preparing our playbook.

At NSFA, we want to support farmers who will engage with candidates. Ultimately, we want to make sure that elected candidates are aware of the key topics that are important to agriculture in Nova Scotia and the role our provincial government should play in supporting our industry. Also, we want these candidates to be familiar with NSFA and reach out to us when they are elected for input on new policies and programs.

To meet our objective – we are working on a series of questions that members

can submit to local debates and questions to be asked when you meet a candidate on the election trail. These will be available on our website and shared through our normal communications channels. Questions will be themed around school food, local procurement, mental health, and environmental resources such as soil, water, and land.

We are hopeful we can host some form of ag-candidate debate. Given the times, we're not sure what that could look like. Stay tuned to our social media channels and enews for updates!

Nova Scotia's Agencies, Boards and Commissions

Opportunities are open!

Participating on an Agency, Boards or Commission (ABC) is an opportunity to have input on issues that matter to you. Use your passion and experience to serve on one of the province's more than 190 ABCs. While many opportunities exist specific to agriculture, there are opportunities in other departments that may be of interest.

Agriculture vacancies with a deadline of May 25th include:

- Meat Inspection Board
- Natural Products Marketing Council, Nova Scotia
- Crop and Livestock Insurance Arbitration Board, Nova Scotia
- Farm Registration Appeal Committee
- Farm Practices Board
- Agricultural Marshland Conservation Commission
- Animal Welfare Appeal Board (previously known as Animal Cruelty Appeal Board)

Other agriculture vacancies include:

- Crop and Livestock Insurance Commission, Nova Scotia
- Farm Loan Board, Nova Scotia
- Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission
- Livestock Health Services Board
- Veterinary Medical Association Council, Nova Scotia

To learn more about the above mentioned and other opportunities, please check out www.novascotia.ca/abc

Appointments to the Round Table on the Environment and Sustainable Prosperity



NSFA's Policy Analyst, Maxine MacLean has been appointed to the Round Table on the Environment and Sustainable Prosperity. She will be a great voice for the industry!

The round table advises the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and the Premier on protecting our environment, and how it links to strengthening our economy and supporting our social goals.

In the spirit of tax season...

A Food Bank Tax Credit for Farmers was introduced in December 2016. NSFA did a fair amount of promotion around this new opportunity when it was released, but it never hurts to remind you of this potential opportunity.

The Food Bank Tax Credit for Farmers is a non-refundable income tax credit for individuals or corporations that carry on the business of farming and donate agricultural products to eligible food banks in Nova Scotia. The credit is 25 per cent of the fair market value of the agricultural products donated and is available for donations made on or after January 1, 2016. The donation must be made to a charitable food bank in Nova Scotia.

For more detailed information, you can "google search" Nova Scotia Food Bank Tax Credit for Farmers. Regulations are available as well as a guidance document written in plain language.

They're In!

Campaign and platform objectives are always useful to gauge a party's

commitment to agriculture, but no document specifies departmental priorities quite like mandate letters.

At the end of March 2021, new mandate letters became public. It was a breath of fresh air to see agriculture a priority outside of the typical Minister of Agriculture letters.

Agriculture and farming made appearances in mandate letters, including:

Minister responsible for the Departments of Labour and Advanced Education and Immigration and Population Growth;

- assist in promoting our immigration and agricultural interests by providing pathways that compliment the federal government's Agri-Food Immigration Pilot Program.

Minister responsible for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development;

- A focus on local food in school meal programs will make our children healthier and happier and support our farmers and fishers.

Minister responsible for the Department of Energy and Mines;

- work with your ministerial colleagues to expand energy efficiency upgrades for farms and food processing facilities to improve competitiveness and reduce costs, emissions, and our reliance on imported foods.

The Premier also issued his own mandate letter highlighting his priority areas which includes "strongly promote Nova Scotia's agricultural, fishing, resource, population and trade interests at the federal level."

Highlights from the mandate letter for Agriculture include:

- work with producers and the agriculture industry to develop a provincial strategy to extend the growing season to increase year-round food production, offset imports, and increase local consumption.
- represent Nova Scotia's agricultural interests to the federal government, which plays a major role in trade, regulations, labour, and supply management.

- work with the Minister of Service Nova Scotia and Internal Services to help the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development and other ministerial colleagues expand access to healthy, local food choices in schools and get more local food into other public institutions like hospitals and universities.

All letters can be found here: https://novascotia.ca/exec_council/2021-letters.html

Mandate letters are typically issued following an election. However, it appears that Premier Rankin wanted to solidify his vision for Nova Scotia with a new set of mandate letters. When an election is called, we can likely assume that we'll see pieces of the mandate letters and the budget included in the Liberal Platform.

While there is more work to be done to inform Ministers and elected officials of the unique opportunities and challenges that agriculture faces, the tides are slowly starting to shift.

Geese and Damage to Farms

Did you know you can apply for a permit under the Migratory Birds Regulations to address conflicts with geese? If you are experiencing damage on your farm caused by geese, you are encouraged to contact Canadian Wildlife Services to explore options. T: 506-364-5068 E: ec.scfatlpermis-cwsatlpermits.ec@canada.ca

Some key points we heard in a recent webinar with Canadian Wildlife services include:

- To manage geese on your property, apply deterrent techniques as soon as possible and apply for a permit early on.
- Permits will only be issued to a person who owns, leases, or manages an area of land.
- Managing nuisance wildlife usually requires a long-term approach and you should be able to describe the long-term plan for your property when applying for a kill permit.

One of the best ways to prevent conflicts and reduce the attractiveness of their properties to Canada Geese. A handbook is available (just google search "Canada goose management and population control") with more details on what can be done and who to contact for more information.

Farm Safety Update

Farmers Safety Corner

Gearing up for another growing season during COVID-19 may be challenging for some farms but let Farm Safety Nova Scotia make light work of it by providing some time saving tools and resources.

Join the Farm Safety Advisor twice per month to explore your specific farm safety challenges. Lori Brookhouse is a Canadian Registered Safety Professional and a Certified Health and Safety Consultant who has the knowledge and experience to answer questions. You can ask about legislation, your current farm safety plan or developing a farm safety plan, request a best practice, gain advice on a challenge you are having on farm, or how to access additional tools and resources.

These meetings are held virtually over Zoom/phone call every third Wednesday of the month from 11:30am to 12:00pm and every fourth Wednesday of the month from 7-7:30pm.

Advisory Services

If you are pressed for time throughout the year and would like some professional help with safety initiatives or building a Farm Safety Plan, book a one-on-one consult with the Farm Safety Advisor. This will free up your time and resources to use in other areas on the farm.

The benefits of hiring a CRSP:

- Professional advice
- OHS compliance
- Increased employee motivation and retention, increased productivity
- Efficiency and sustainability through a well-designed farm safety plan
- Reduced cost of workplace incident and injury through the use of established safety policies, rules, practices, procedures, and safety training plans.



There is a fee for service and a cost estimate will be provided upon booking. The rates are below industry standard. For more information visit the Farm Safety Website and select Advisory Services under Member Services.

Farmers Safety Rally

Do you want to hold safety meetings with your workers but are not sure how to get started? The Farmers Safety Rally is a template to hold a safety meeting on various topics. The Rally is one page double sided. On the front page is the information to deliver the specific safety topic. The back of the page provides an agenda which suggests things to bring up and review in the meeting, as well as prompts for questions to ask the workers to demonstrate two-way communication between the farm and the workers.

This gives the worker an opportunity to bring forward any safety initiatives or concerns. Also included, is a short quiz on the topic to see if the workers were paying close attention and an attendance sheet to note who was at the meeting. These meeting templates are posted on social media weekly as well as available for download on the Farm Safety Nova Scotia website under [Resources](#).

Upcoming Training

We have two new online training courses now available, Skidsteer Safety Awareness and Tractor & Farm Machinery. These are awareness courses only. The Tractor & Farm Machinery course is not compliant with the required training for the Class 8.

Over the next two months upcoming webinars include: In the Know (a mental health literacy training course) and Mental Health First Aid (providing help to a person developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health

crisis). Available workshops include Endorsement Testing and the Tractor Safety course compliant with the Class 8 license.

Don't forget to pick up or download your Passport to Safety to record all of your safety training and participate in the contest for some cool prizes. Contest ends May 31, 2021.

If the training you are looking for is not listed on our Events Calendar, request training with the Farm Safety Advisor through e-mail lbrookhouse@nsfa-fane.ca or call 902-957-2785.

Wrap Up

The commodity specific Farm Safety Plan for Christmas Tree Growers was released on March 27, 2021 at the Lunenburg County Christmas Tree Producers Association annual meeting. There were 15 binders and USBs with information on how to get started given out to those in attendance. An additional 15 binders and USBs are available through the Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia by contacting Brittany at outreach@ctcns.ca or contact the Farm Safety Advisor by e-mailing lbrookhouse@nsfa-fane.ca or call 902-957-2785. The plan will be available on the Farm Safety Nova Scotia Website for download soon. Also, the plan has been sent for Spanish translation and we expect the Spanish templates to be available at the end of June.

Event	Date & Time
farmsafetyns.ca/events	
In The Know	May 5 9:30am-2:30pm
In The Know	June 9 9:30am-2:30pm

Supporting biodiversity and agriculture in Nova Scotia

There has been a lot of conversations lately about the new *Biodiversity Act* and the potential implications on the agricultural industry. The initial opinions on the Act were as wide ranging as the commodities we grow in this province.

In March of 2019, the provincial government introduced legislation to make it easier to protect the province's wild animals, plants and water species. The *Biodiversity Act* was intended to create a platform for regulations to manage threats to rare ecosystems and to better protect wildlife against invasive species. Following consultations and review, Bill No. 4 was re-introduced as an *Act to Provide for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biodiversity in Nova Scotia*. Amid concerns raised by private landowners, the government removed biodiversity emergency orders, offences and fines from the Act, and limited the scope to Crown lands unless permission is given on private lands.

The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture will await the regulations to better understand the potential impact to farms, however the new changes that have been passed address the primary concerns raised by Federation members. While much of the conversations in the news and on social media had focused on private landowners and fears of overarching powers in the Act, it is unfortunate that the opportunities to enhance education and collaboration with private landowners is getting off to another poor start.



Source: farmbiodiversity.ca - Agricultural Biodiversity Conservation Planning

According to a report by the United Nations, up to one million species could face extinction in the near future due to human influence on the natural world; this was highlighted in another EFP [News and Views article](#) last year (March 2020). This is a global issue, and Nova Scotia would be the first province in Canada to pass biodiversity legislation. Being a leader can be a great opportunity to affect change, but it can also create fear and uncertainty when there is so much that is not known as the path is being forged. What is known is that plant and animal species are being threatened at an unprecedented rate around the world and more effort is needed within our province and across this country.

The Federation has been supporting various biodiversity initiatives for years as farmers already play an important role in preserving habitat. In our agricultural landscape, a wide variety of ecosystems are present, ranging from cropland to woodland, and pasture to wetlands. Numerous ecosystems often exist within an individual farm operation that support biodiversity and provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Since 2016, the NSFA has received funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada through the Species at Risk Partnerships on Agricultural Lands (SARPAL) program. The Wood Turtle Strides project was an incentive-based

stewardship program working directly with farmers to adjust farming practices to better protect Wood Turtle habitat. Current SARPAL funding is aiming to partner with farms to demonstrate conservation practices for additional species and increase awareness and opportunities for conservation.

The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program has supported Nova Scotia Lands and Forestry providing Agricultural Biodiversity Conservation Plans for individual farms for many years. Numerous farms across the province have had a plan completed to identify current and potential activities that support biodiversity within the farm operation and include a biodiversity assessment and a riparian health assessment of the farm. The plans highlight the positive aspects of current farming activities and recommend changes that could be implemented to further enhance conservation efforts.

Nova Scotia is also one of three provinces currently participating in the first phase of a Canadian Forage and Grassland Association (CFGGA) project to develop province-specific, on-line habitat and biodiversity management tools. The NSFA and EFP program are supporting the project activities to be incorporated into the Environmental Farm Plan program later this year.

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These projects are helping to develop relationships with government and other organizations to increase our knowledge and understanding of biodiversity and habitats on the farm. For all of these efforts, farming activities can still have a significant impact on some species and it is important that we continue to learn best management practices to ensure that we, as an industry, are doing the best job we can at balancing production with habitat conservation.

Biodiversity is important to protect our abundance of plants and animals and prevent more being added to the list

of at-risk species in Nova Scotia. Our province and agriculture industry have historically worked well together and have approached industry issues and concerns collaboratively and developed guidelines (e.g. Manure Management Guidelines) and best management practices as opposed to imposing legislation. This has worked because our local producers are willing to be proactive on issues.

Although the recent changes remove the immediate concerns of emergency orders and penalties for this new Act, similar legislation and penalties have been in place for many years through the province's Endangered Species Act. Although enforcement is rare for our industry, it has occurred. Farmers should take this opportunity to assess their current farming practices and become more aware of the opportunities to

support habitat and biodiversity on the farm. Keep your Environmental Farm Plan up to date, review the list of species at risk in Nova Scotia: <https://novascotia.ca/natr/wildlife/species-at-risk/>, contact Lands and Forestry about an Agricultural Biodiversity Conservation Plan or reach out to local non-governmental organizations doing conservation work in the province.

The Environmental Farm Plan program is committed to helping farmers with all of their environmental concerns. The EFP program will be adding new SARPAL factsheets to the EFP website shortly and hope to have the CFGA on-line habitat and biodiversity tool available soon. For more information on the program, visit the EFP website: <https://nsefp.ca/> or contact the NSFA office to speak to an EFP coordinator for any farm specific questions. 902-893-2293 or efp@nsfa-fane.ca.



#HowNSAgs Contest

Are you involved in agriculture in Nova Scotia? Show us!

Whether you're a farmer, a farm employee, lender, transport, processor, sales, government etc. we want to see what agriculture looks like to you.

Snap a photo of YOUR agriculture using the #HowNSAgs hashtag, for a chance to win a \$200 gift certificate to Sensea Nordic Spa!

We would like to thank Central Equipment for sponsoring our prize for 2021.

Contest Rules

1. Photo submissions will be accepted from the following platforms: Facebook and Twitter.



2019 Winner



2020 Winner

#HowNSAgs



2021 Sponsor



2. Photo must use the hashtag #HowNSAgs.

3. Photos or accounts must be set to Public so that NSYF can locate all contest entries.

4. Tagging @nsyoungfarmers will help us locate your photos easier!

5. Multiple photos per person are encouraged, however only one contest entry per person.

6. Winner will be selected at random.

7. Contest closes May 31, 2021.

For more information please contact nsyoungfarmers@gmail.com

Public Trust Update

Case Study Underway

The recent #buttergate media sensation has become an important issue related to the work of public trust in Nova Scotia and across the country. NSFA members, farmers, suppliers, processors, and distributors can learn from this situation.

We want to help identify escalating issues and opportunities for effective communications in the future with the goal of maintaining public trust and confidence in our food system. Through the Public Trust program, NSFA has contracted NATIONAL Public Relations to review the #buttergate situation and develop a case study that can be used to develop training and resources for farmers, industry and the food system.

The training and resources will not be commodity specific. We want to help all commodities and sectors to be prepared for media and social media situations like #buttergate in the future. Stay tuned for more updates on this project. If you have questions or would like to be involved please contact Janette McDonald at jmcdonald@nsfa-fane.ca.

New Training Opportunity Available!

NSFA has secured 28 seats for training options from Utensil.ca. Utensil was developed as a resource for the entire food system and anyone interested in learning more about it and our incredible food.

There are three online courses offered:

So...your client is a farmer

This course is designed to help you build relationships & business opportunities with farmers. It is a great first step to working more effectively with farmers.




Whether you are directly working in the field or work for an organization that interacts with farmers or impacts their businesses somehow, this program is built for you!

Grow your own brand

What is your BRAND? Whether it is your corporate image or your personal one, your brand is something that needs to be nurtured on a regular basis. Through video and a downloadable workbook, you'll be able to feel more confident in how to build a better brand.

Media training

This training program is a great first step to help you prepare for the next time the media calls. It's specifically designed for people who work in agriculture and food, but the principles apply for everyone. This training is good for your personal development, as well as for any organization or sector you might represent in an interview with a blend of practical information, tips and practice.

These are all self-directed learning options where you login to the course and work at your own pace. You will receive a certificate of completion when you finish the course.

You can learn more about the courses at utensil.ca. To apply to take one of the courses for free through NSFA, please visit: nsfa-fane.ca/publictrust to fill out and submit the application form.

Saltscapes Virtual Expo a Hit!

Meet Your Farmer had a booth at the virtual Saltscapes Expo which ran from April 30 to May 1. We showcased the Your Farmers, Your Nova Scotia campaign, our Meet Your Farmer: Let's Get Cooking series, Open Farm Day past and future and chatted with people from all over Nova Scotia. We look forward to attending more virtual and in-person events this year!

Let's Get Cooking and In Your Kitchen Mash Up!

Meet Your Farmer is teaming up with Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture for the next Let's Get Cooking episode with In Your Kitchen flavour. Stay tuned for details and the delicious recipe packed with Nova Scotia goodness!

Launching We Talk. We Grow.



Supporting the Mental Health of Nova Scotia Farmers.

By: David Newcombe, FSNS President

The Report of the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, Mental Health: A Priority for our Farmers, launched in May of 2019, found that, “more than one in five Canadians experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives.” The statistics show that Nova Scotia fares worse in this regard than their provincial and territorial counterparts, with 9.2 per cent perceiving their mental health as fair or poor in contrast to the national average of 7 per cent.

What this makes unequivocally clear, is that we need to act, and we need to act now.

To take you back to where it all began – at the outset of 2020, Farm Safety Nova Scotia was in the initial planning stage of developing a mental health framework for Nova Scotia’s farmers when COVID-19 made landing in the province. The response and impacts were immediate – farmers’ markets closed, social distancing was enforced, shifts were made in protocols for temporary foreign workers and the community revamped the process of getting product to Nova Scotia’s consumers.

This dramatic change in process and day-to-day operations has also shifted the approach Farm Safety has had to take in addressing the challenges our farm community is facing

in understanding and acceptance around mental health. Additionally, looking at the effectiveness and accessibility of the mental health resources and services available to provide support. We applied for and received funding through the Canadian Agriculture Partnership (CAP) COVID-19 Agriculture Response Program, which has provided immediate support for farmers, their employees and their families in the form of organized webinars and workshops offered through Farm Safety at no cost to the participant. While the webinars and workshops will provide a temporary solution, offering immediate support in a time of greater need with a pandemic, a long-term strategy is still very much required to create and maintain both mental and physical health – for our Nova Scotia farmers.

CAP’s funding has supported the development of the Blueprint for a Mental Health Action Plan for Nova Scotia Farmers, as well as the creation of a public awareness campaign - that will include the launch of a website serving to both educate and support the Nova Scotia farming community on maintaining strong mental health and wellness. Part of this process included creating our vision, goals and objectives for We Talk. We Grow., which I would like to share with you:

Vision

A culture within the Nova Scotia farm community where mental health and well-being is valued, prioritized and protected.

Goals

To ensure the farm community has the support and resources needed to protect and promote mental health and wellness.

Objectives

- **Increase education and awareness** of mental health and wellness.
- **Reduce stigma** through continued communication of mental health best practices.
- **Empower individuals and organizations** to become leaders in promoting mental health and wellness.
- **Strengthen relationships** with partners to work together to enhance Nova Scotia’s mental health offerings.

- **Coordinate delivery of tailored tools, resources** and supports for mental health and wellness.
- **Reduce stressors** negatively impacting mental health and wellness through advocacy and program delivery.

As I mentioned earlier, along with the launch of our Blueprint for a Mental Health Action Plan for Nova Scotia Farmers, we have developed a resource-based website wetalkwegrow.ca, and have plenty of promotional items to help raise awareness of the campaign. One item that is quite exciting is the development of a new road sign featuring the We Talk. We Grow. logo. Farms will be able to request a road sign that can be placed in the ground beside your own farm signage or wherever you see fit!

This initiative has also seen the creation of a leadership charter, and an ambassador program.

Leadership Charter

Inspired by the Nova Scotia Health & Safety Leadership Charter, created in response to the province’s Workplace Safety Strategy, Farm Safety Nova Scotia has established a Mental Health Leadership Charter – encouraging leaders across the province’s farming community to commit to promoting and establishing a stronger and more responsive mental health and wellness system.

Ambassador Program

The We Talk. We Grow. Ambassador will help communicate and support the mental health and wellness of the farming community in Nova Scotia through the Mental Health Awareness Campaign. With education and training, the Ambassador will help reduce stigma, increase awareness of the various phases of mental health, and refer those in the community to the available mental health support and resources.

You can access the action plan, leadership charter, and our resource library by visiting wetalkwegrow.ca.

I’m very proud of this campaign and of the work that Farm Safety will be putting into it. Mental health is something that touches all of us, especially in this industry. My hope is that our farming community will embrace We Talk. We Grow., and the messaging behind it. When we talk, we grow. Most importantly, we get better.



AgSector Update

Introducing Member Services Coordinator, Nicole Shanahan



Nicole Shanahan is originally from Cole Harbour and now lives in Truro. She has a B.Sc. in Environmental Sciences from Memorial University of Newfoundland and an M.Sc. Environmental Sciences from the University of Freiburg in Germany.

In Germany, Nicole studied the effects of nitrogen and phosphorus fertilization on tree root growth as part of an international tree diversity experiment. She has been with the NSFA team since September of 2020.

Nicole has always been passionate about sustainable living and knowing where food comes from. Travelling and learning about new cultures, food is always at the centre, which is why she always tries to connect with resident farmers, hunters and/or fishermen to find locally supplied products. Nicole has worked on grain, olive, hops, and other farms locally and abroad and loves being a part of these communities.

Over the next year, Nicole will be working with the AgSector program on a number of deliverables and initiatives such as: developing a plan for career promotions, supporting Nova Scotia Young Farmers, managing the NS Ag Job Bank, managing

SkillsPass, coordinating Workplace Education, and more! We're looking forward to having Nicole in this role.

"I'm excited about the collaborative nature of the role! I hope to get to know our NSFA and ag community members better and look forward to working together. I look forward to promoting the exciting careers in agriculture and supporting new entrants and young farmers," said Nicole.

Workforce Development Coordinator

We are in the process of hiring a Workforce Development Coordinator (WDC), thanks to additional funding from the Department of Labour and Advanced Education. Our hope is to introduce you to our new Coordinator in our next News & Views article in July!

Curious what the WDC will be responsible for? The WDC will be developing and facilitating industry focused strategies that attract, retain and develop workers to meet the needs of the industry. The WDC will work with community partners to raise awareness of career and job opportunities, identify skill and training requirements of the industry, provide training to current and potential workers, and increase collaboration and coordination of workforce development efforts. The WDC must ensure effective labour market information (LMI) systems are in place to understand current supply and demand needs of the industry. The WDC will also work closely with farm employers and owners to ensure an understanding of leading human resource practices and labour legislation to support the attraction and retention of workers. The WDC will actively promote the industry to new entrants.

Workforce Development and Industry Capacity Roundtable Sessions

We have contracted the services of Barrington Consulting to help develop a collaborative approach to ensuring a sustainable industry through workforce development and industry capacity building. In the middle of April, we were happy to bring together a great group for a visioning session and an action planning session. Some of the groups around the table include: farmers,

Dalhousie University, Department of Agriculture, Department of Labour & Advanced Education, Department of Education & Early Childhood Development, Cape Breton Partnership, Cumberland Business Connector, Literacy Nova Scotia, Farm Management Canada – and many more! We had two excellent sessions and are very pleased with the content that came from our roundtables! We would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate. Below are our draft vision statements that were developed during the session.

Skills, training, education

We are an agriculture industry that values and supports skills training and education that is relevant, practical, and accessible. All of the people who work in our industry are trained and ready to do the jobs required in a safe, professional, and expert way.

Career & farming promotions

Agriculture careers are respected, actively sought after and eagerly promoted throughout communities in Nova Scotia. Working in agriculture is a career of choice for new professionals, experienced employees, and those new to Nova Scotia alike.

HR Management

We are an agriculture industry that values its people. Our leading human resource and succession practices are focused on attraction, retention, and engaging future generations. Our world class HR approach guarantees that we always have the people we need.

Automation & Innovation

We are an agriculture industry focused on continuous improvement, where we embrace innovation and automation. We are committed to taking bold steps and trying innovative approaches. This ensures a sustainable industry for the future.

Equity, diversity, inclusion

We are an agriculture industry enriched by the diversity of our cultural communities. We actively create pathways for equity seeking individuals and communities to participate in all aspects of agriculture in Nova Scotia.

Upcoming Events

May 5, 2021

In the Know Mental Health Literacy Training

June 2, 2021

Christmas Tree Council of NS AGM

June 9, 2021

In the Know Mental Health Literacy Training

September 19, 2021

Open Farm Day

November 25, 2021

NSFA 126th Annual Meeting



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Atlantic Agricultural Interpretive Centre

Dalhousie University, Faculty of Agriculture

is in the initial stages of development of an educational, interpretive center for Atlantic Canada and would like to have input from the Nova Scotian agricultural community. As a member of this community, you are invited to participate in a brief survey, the results of which will help inform the content direction for a series of interactive exhibits to be located within the new centre. The proposed Atlantic Agricultural Interpretive Centre (AAIC) will be located at the Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture campus in Truro N.S. and be accessible to students, faculty, those working in agriculture and members of the

public. The compact facility will serve as a showcase for the region and is intended to improve public trust in agriculture, highlight the future of agriculture and its role in sustainability, while inspiring young Atlantic Canadians to pursue a career in the sector. More information on the goals of the center can be found [here](#).

We welcome you to take part in the 8-10-minute survey to share your views about agriculture in Nova Scotia. For a link to the survey or further information please reach out to Lauren Peters, the Community Education Manager at Dalhousie Faculty of Agriculture via email (lauren.peters@dal.ca)

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NSFA News + Views is the Newsletter of the NS Federation of Agriculture, the voice of Nova Scotia's agriculture industry.

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