

news+views

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Farm Registration Renewals

Keep an eye on your mailboxes!

Farm registration renewals are set to arrive soon- remember to check the box in section 6 of your renewal to start or continue your NSFA membership at no additional cost!

Farm Registration covers April 1 to March 31 each year. Please note that you can renew by mail, fax, online, or in-person at any Access Nova Scotia Centre. Applications and payment cannot be accepted at the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture office or by the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture.

2024 is also the start of the new five-year cycle and we are pleased to share that our requests for additional gross farm income categories, and fee structure

changes we approved by Cabinet. The Farm Registration Review Committee also recommended that cross-compliance with programs must be enforced across the government, and this is something NSFA will continue to advocate for.

The changes to gross farm income categories and associated fees are highlighted on page 5. There you can also find information on a new policy for refunds on farm registration fees for new entrants with a gross farm income of \$29,999 and under. You can also find options for NSFA membership of nonregistered farms.

Continued on page 5...



Check the Box in Section 6!

Strong Representation

Member Benefits Farm Resources

Effective Advocacy



Serving Nova Scotia farmers since 1895.

Message from the Executive Director

Our team has been out and about at industry events, hosting events, and meeting with government and industry stakeholders. It has been a busy start to 2024!

The 2023 season was a challenging one for many of you – from wildfires to floods, to rain that just wouldn't stop. Nova Scotia farmers are seeing the impacts of climate change firsthand, as we approach another spring season and many of you are making plans for getting seed in the ground, I'm hopeful for a better year ahead!

We worked closely with Minister Morrow and the Department of Agriculture over the past few months to provide information on the impacts of the weather to our members. While you're reading this, the deadline will likely have passed but we are extremely appreciative of the \$9.2 million 2023 Season Response Program launched by the government in February.

Our hope going into this season is that we won't need to see programs like Fiona Relief, Polar Vortex, or Season Response but that we will be able to shift our focus from advocating for response programs to advocating for improved risk management programs.

At the end of the day, if we had effective risk management tools – whether that be BRMs or infrastructure insurance – we wouldn't need to see response programs to the same degree that we do now. And that's where we need to get so that farmers can farm confidently, knowing there are safety nets in place when Mother Nature or markets don't cooperate.

I also wanted to touch briefly on the 2024-25 Provincial Budget released at the end of February. Unfortunately, we didn't have the opportunity to attend Budget Lockup this year – Mother Nature had other plans for our flights

back from Ottawa. There was a small 2.5% increase in the Department of Agriculture budget estimate. However, there were also several positives from other Departments including a School Lunch Program, that we hope will focus on local products, investment in cellular infrastructure, dykeland system upgrades, funding for clean technologies, and increased funding in rural roads. All of these highlights align with the recommendations we made in our Growing Nova Scotia Together Report!

Speaking of our Growing Nova Scotia Together Report, we are working with the government to plan our next Ministerial engagement for 2024 with the plans of building on the first Ministerial Roundtable hosted last May. There is still lots of work to do from our initial recommendations but it's key to keep the dialogue going to ensure agriculture remains top of mind for our elected officials.

With the updates to farm registration passing, we will be expanding our policy and advocacy by hiring a dedicated staff person for these activities. You'll see the posting in the coming month and I am really looking forward to having the additional capacity so that we can ensure the farmers' voice is represented at the table when key policy decisions are being made.



Carolyn Van Den Heuvel, Executive Director

With a decreasing percentage of our population having a direct connection to agriculture, our ability to ensure the farmers' voice is represented is critically important. We must not underestimate the impacts of a changing population and political landscape on our industry. We must continue to elevate the profile of agriculture throughout the province and we need to dedicate our resources to making that happen!

As always, I'm privileged and honoured to be in a role that allows me to work on behalf of Nova Scotia farmers and I am looking forward to adding additional skills to our team to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future for Nova Scotia farms and farmers.





The Canadian Federation of Agriculture hosted its Annual Meeting on February 27 and 28 in Ottawa. It is always a great opportunity to connect with leaders across the country and with federal politicians. There was a lot of discussion relating to trade and supply chain challenges facing farmers with a particular focus on rail. While this is more of a Western Canada challenge, we do see some impacts in Nova Scotia.

The CFA had a range of high-profile speakers at the AGM, including:

- Lawrence MacAulay, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food
- Robert Bonnie, Under Secretary of Farm Production and Conservation, USDA
- John Barlow, Agriculture Critic for the Conservative Party of Canada
- Alistair MacGregor, Agriculture Critic for the NDP
- Yves Perron, Agriculture Critic for the Bloc Québécois
- John Weigelt, National Technology Officer, Microsoft
- Steve Verheul, Principal, GT and Company

Some presentations will be posted to the CFA website in the coming weeks:
cfa-fca.ca

At the meeting, the CFA membership passed 53 resolutions that will outline much of its advocacy efforts in the coming year. This included several reaffirmed resolutions submitted in previous years. This year's resolutions

Nova Scotia Executive Attends CFA Meetings in Ottawa

cover a range of issues, including: conservation, climate change, labour, rural infrastructure, crop protection, international trade, risk management and much more.

Many of the resolutions have an impact on Nova Scotia agriculture but there are several to highlight with direct connection to NSFA resolutions and our existing policy, positions, and programs.

Improving the Advance Payments Program (UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA ask AAFC to improve the APP by permanently increasing the program's interest-free portion to \$350,000 and by updating the program's eligibility criteria in consultation with the producer groups using the program.

Drones and Agriculture Research (KAP)

BE IT RESOLVED that CFA lobby the Pest Management Regulatory Agency to amend the Pest Control Products Regulations which would allow for greater flexibility, timeliness and simplicity for the application of pesticides using drones for research purposes.

Support Programs for Agriculture and Research and AgriScience (UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA ask AAFC to re-establish a funding ratio of 70% from government and 30% from the private sector for all research activities initiated by agricultural producers and funded under the AgriScience program and to ensure that this ratio applies even to projects that do not have clear GHG-reduction objectives.

Agricultural Land Protection and Preservation (UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA ask the federal government to ensure that the government funding to support reforestation are not used to the detriment of cultivated land.

Water Withdrawal (UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA ask AAFC to set up investment assistance programs for implementing measures that will secure and optimize water supplies for agricultural operations and minimize the risk of water-use conflicts in the context of adapting to climate change.

Carbon neutrality of agricultural businesses (UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA ask the Government of Canada to establish, in collaboration with agricultural producers, a clear and precise methodology for harmonizing the calculation of the carbon footprints on farms, which will take into account the climate and soil conditions of the provinces and the particularities of each crop and animal production.

Incentive programs for soil health and soil carbon sequestration (BCAC)

BE IT RESOLVED that CFA lobby the federal government to work with provinces and territories to develop additional financial incentive programs focused on improving soil health and increasing organic matter content in soils to enhance its carbon capture abilities and build capacity to adapt to a changing climate, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that CFA lobby the federal government to provide additional federal government funding in the current and successor agricultural policy framework agreements to the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership for financial incentive programs focused on improving soil health and increasing organic matter content in soils.

CFA Annual Meeting Recap Cont'd



Payment for Carbon Sequestration on Livestock Grazing Land (APAS)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA lobby to ensure agricultural producers receive direct compensation from the federal government for the carbon that they are sequestering in their grasslands and grazing lands.

Ensuring Responsive BRM Programs (SM5 & UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA continue its advocacy on BRM programs, and request that the government provide additional financial support to improve resilience against extreme natural disasters and work closely with producers and their associations to begin the revision of BRM programs, particularly AgriRecovery and AgriStability, to ensure that they are more flexible, timely, responsive, and predictable in the face of increasing disaster-related events caused by climate change.

Fully Funded Yield Cushioning (APAS)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA request the federal government to work with provincial crop insurance agencies to fully fund a crop insurance yield cushioning policy to ensure that any previous years' yields used to calculate producers' production guarantees are capped at 70% of their Individual Long-term Average.

Federally inspected slaughter plants – remote inspection and delegation of veterinary procedures (UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA ask the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) to implement regulations that would alleviate the shortage of professional resources needed to inspect federally inspected slaughter plants by allowing

the use of remote inspection or the delegation of certain acts to animal health technicians or food safety technicians in slaughter plants.

Specific Tax Credit for Food Donations made by Producers (UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA ask the federal government to implement a refundable tax credit for food donations made by all types of agricultural businesses and to ensure that donations to local food banks are recognized.

HST as Eligible Input Tax Credit for On-Farm Housing (NSFA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture advocates to the federal government to consider HST/GST on the construction, maintenance, and furnishing of housing for seasonal agricultural and temporary foreign workers as a commercial activity, which would result in those HST costs being treated as an eligible input tax credit.

Development of the Organic Production Sector (UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA ask AAFC to adopt a government action plan to support the organic production sector, in particular for developing organic pest controls and organic seeds, among other developments.

Grocery Prices (OFA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, along with relevant stakeholders, lobby the Federal Government to be included in conversations regarding grocery prices and the impact the food chain infrastructure has on them.

Funding for the Grocery Code Adjudicator Office (UPA)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA ask the Government of Canada to fund the start-up and initial years of the Grocery Code Adjudication Office to ensure its sustainability and viability, and to enable its internal resources to concentrate their efforts on their mission.

Support for Indigenous Engagement (BCAC)

BE IT RESOLVED that CFA lobby the federal government to provide federal government funding that supports efforts by industry associations to engage with Indigenous Peoples on policy development and program design.

Funding for Colleges of Veterinary Medicine (APAS)

BE IT RESOLVED that the CFA call on the federal government to invest in the expansion and enhancement of the Canadian colleges of veterinary medicine to support the recruitment and accreditation of foreign-trained veterinarians.

Farm Registration Cont'd

Updated Fee Structure

The changes to gross farm income categories and associated fees for 2024 are highlighted below:

	New fee	Old fee
< \$29,999	\$205	\$175
\$30,000 - \$99,999	\$325	\$400
\$100,000 - \$249,999	\$500	\$600
\$250,000 - \$499,999	\$675	\$600
\$500,000 - \$749,999	\$850	\$800
\$750,000 - \$999,999	\$1,030	\$800
\$1,000,000 - \$2,499,999	\$1,205	\$975
\$2,500,000 or more	\$1,380	\$975

New Entrant Refund Policy

During the Farm Registration Renewal Process the committee recommended that a new policy should be developed. This will provide financial support to new entrant farm businesses with a gross farm income of less than \$30,000 and encourage new farm businesses to become registered farms in Nova Scotia and to become a member of the Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture. This new refund policy is being implemented by NSFA and is separate from the farm registration process. All interested businesses must register their farm in the existing farm registration process and will then be able to apply for a refund of their fee (\$205). More information and the application form is available at: nsfa-fane.ca/members.

Friends of NSFA

If you no longer qualify to be a registered farm but want to stay connected to the work of NSFA, you can become a Friend of the NSFA. As our friend you 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, fill out the registration form at:

nsfa-fane.ca/friend-of-nsfa

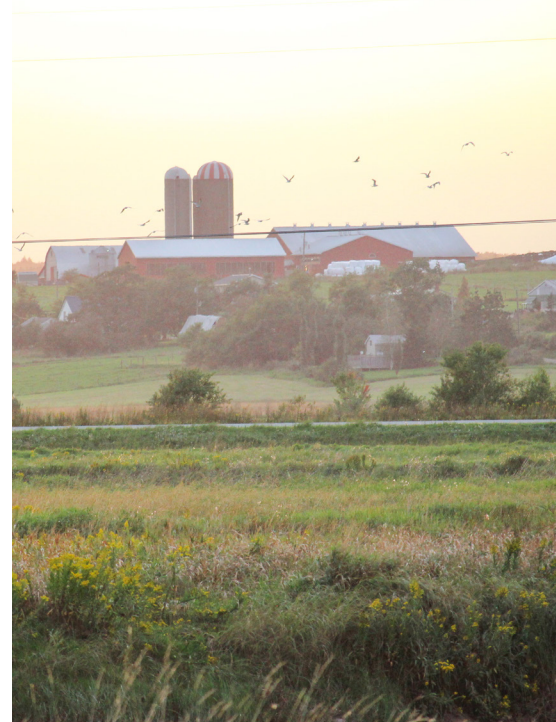
If you have any questions on NSFA Member benefits and programs or on Farm Registration, please contact our office at 902-893-2293. You can also contact the Farm Registration office at 902-893-6377 or 1-866-844-4276.



Member Benefits

As a registered farm business and member of NSFA, you are entitled to Member Benefits! Our list of benefit partners and their offers is also available on our website at nsfa-fane.ca/members.

We are always looking for new benefits for you, so if you have suggestions for benefits you would like to see please reach out to our Communications Manager, Leah at lvissier@nsfa-fane.ca.



Policy Corner

Targeted International Recruitment for Nova Scotia Agriculture

In our Growing Nova Scotia Together report, we included a potential solution to our workforce challenges to work with industry, establishing targeted immigration programs to support farm workers and farm operators moving to Nova Scotia.

We are thrilled that Immigration and Population Growth of the Department of Labour, Skills, and Immigration has taken this recommendation and is bringing it to fruition.

As we work with Immigration and Population Growth and the Department of Agriculture, we are looking to gain a better sense of the needs of industry.

By understanding how many farms are looking for workers and/or successors, it will allow us to build the targeted recruitment plans for the future.

There are two targets:

- Full-time permanent workers
- Farm successor/buyer

If you are interested in learning more about the opportunities to engage in international recruitment to meet your farm's needs, please email farmandworkforce@nsfa-fane.ca or call the office.

Supporting Succession Planning - What is needed?

There were lots of conversations at our Annual Meeting in November about succession planning, so we are digging into the situation a bit more! While we understand many farms do not have succession plans, we are seeking to understand why and what interventions are needed to support farm succession!

We will be conducting a survey on succession planning in farming, aiming to better understand the challenges, opportunities, and supports needed to ensure a successful transition of farms in Nova Scotia. Your insights are crucial

in helping us understand how to deliver and advocate for policy and programs to support farm succession.

Keep an eye out for the survey on social media and in our eNews! The survey will end March 29, 2024. Completed surveys can be entered for a chance to win a prize valued at \$250. Winners will be selected at random and notified via email.



Thinking of the food system in Nova Scotia, how would you rate your trust in the following groups?

Public Trust Update

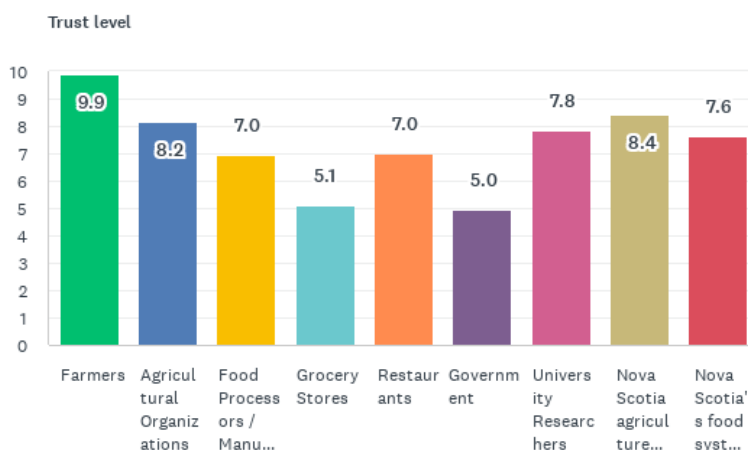
Canada's Agriculture Day Celebrations

We were proud to partner with The Kilted Chef again this year to promote Canada's Agriculture Day for a full week. Through this partnership, we reached thousands of Canadians featuring three recipes which are hosted on kiltedchef.ca, a blog post celebrating all things agriculture in Canada, and videos showcasing each of the three recipes.

Artist Courtney Turner of Woolgather Creative worked with us to develop 5 new colouring pages for our annual Colouring Contest. All of our entries were posted to our Meet Your Farmer Facebook page. Contest winners receive a Meet Your Farmer prize pack and are posted on meetyourfarmer.ca/create-with-us/

Meet Your Farmer on Heritage Day at Cole Harbor Place

Meet Your Farmer hosted a fantastic event for families in Halifax Regional Municipality on Monday, February 19th, thanks to the incredible support from our friends at Cole Harbor Place and industry partners including: Egg Farmers of Nova Scotia, Dairy Farmers of Nova Scotia, Chicken Farmers of Nova Scotia, Turkey Farmers of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Beekeepers Association, Christmas Tree Council of Nova Scotia, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, 4-H Nova Scotia, and NSFA team members from Living Labs- Nova Scotia and Farm and Workforce Development. The interactive activities and displays at each of our partner's tables were really engaging for visitors and enabled this mostly urban audience to get a taste of farm life, agriculture, and Nova Scotia's food system. Thank you to everyone who attended and made this event a success!



Digital Harvest

The Nova Scotia Federation of Agriculture, through Meet Your Farmer, was excited to partner with the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture, Taste of Nova Scotia, and #SocialEast to host a one-day symposium on marketing, communication, and building public trust. This symposium, Digital Harvest, was hosted February 22nd at the Halifax Convention Centre. Presentations from Knead Technologies, Google Canada, Pinterest, Food Island PEI, and Julie Ogilvie Digital Marketing Strategist were filled with tactics that farmers, and the food industry can easily implement. Attendees also benefited from a local perspective through an in-depth look at the Canadian Centre for Food Integrity's 2023 research, panel discussions with Luckett Vineyards, Spurr Brothers Farms Ltd., and Bramble Hill Farm, as well as a presentation on 'Scrappy Marketing Tactics' from one of the founders of Good Robot Brewing.

Nova Scotia Food & Farming Survey 2023 Results Report

Our annual survey aims to measure public sentiments in food and farming in Nova Scotia. It was designed to complement the data collected from CCFI which collects data on various aspects of the food system and is adapted to reflect changes in the landscape as needed. With three years of survey data now available to us, we can begin to see trends, and we also see areas of opportunity for improvement. We look to these survey results for insights as we plan our communications and consider topics for Meet Your Farmer programming.

Farmers continue to be the most trusted members of the food system in Nova Scotia with 87% of respondents reporting a high level of trust in farmers. Grocery stores and governments are the least trusted. Overall, trust in food and farming in Nova Scotia remains high. The results of these annual surveys remain very encouraging, despite slight reductions in some areas. Transparency and honesty throughout the whole system continue to be very important in communicating with the public.

A full report is available at: nsf-fane.ca/publictrust/fact-sheets-infographics



Navigating the Stress of Spring



As the winter months slowly but surely melt away, many farmers find themselves at the threshold of a new season. As many of us know, the spring brings with it a surge of activity as fields come to life, signaling the start of planting season. While this transition can bring opportunities for growth, renewal, and a much-needed reset for many, it also ushers in a wave of stress and pressure. That's why it's critical to approach this season proactively, carving out time to prioritize mental and emotional well-being amidst the hustle and bustle.

Acknowledge the Transition:

The shift from winter to spring marks a significant change in pace for many producers. While the colder months may or may not have provided a respite from the intensity of fieldwork, spring, without a doubt, brings a flurry of activity. Recognizing and accepting this transition is the first step in managing stress effectively. It's easy for stress to sneak into our lives unnoticed, sometimes only becoming obvious when it feels like we've hit a breaking point. However, before reaching 'empty', acknowledge the importance of prioritizing the nourishment of both body and mind this season. Just as you would ensure your equipment is ready for the season ahead, prepare yourself mentally as well.

Set Realistic Goals:

As you gear up for planting season, set realistic goals that align with your

capabilities and resources. It helps to break down larger tasks into manageable steps, to allow yourself to focus on one thing at a time. Avoid the temptation to overcommit or set unattainable expectations, as this can lead to feelings of overwhelm and burnout. By setting achievable goals, you'll not only reduce stress but also set yourself up for success in the long run.

Prioritize Self-Care:

Amidst the demands of spring, make sure you don't neglect the most critical 'machine' in your operation – yourself. Make self-care a priority by incorporating activities that rejuvenate and replenish energy. Ask yourself, "what fills my cup?" and try to do more of it.

Whether it's taking short breaks throughout the day, engaging in physical exercise that you genuinely enjoy, or spending time with friends and loved ones, find moments to recharge and unwind. Remember, taking care of yourself is not a luxury but a necessity, especially during busy seasons.

Seek Support:

Don't hesitate to lean on your support network when times get tough. Whether it's fellow farmers, friends, or family members, reaching out for support can provide helpful perspective and encouragement. Share your concerns and challenges openly, knowing that you're not alone in the hecticness of spring farming. Sometimes, a listening ear or a helping ear can make all the difference in alleviating stress.

Embrace Flexibility:

While it's not always easy to do, try your best to recognize that not everything will go according to plan, and that's okay. Instead of dwelling on setbacks or mistakes, focus on finding creative solutions and learning from experiences. Making a conscious effort to cultivate a mindset of flexibility will better equip you to navigate the ups and downs of the season.

Celebrate Progress:

Throughout the whirlwind of planting season, it's important to celebrate your

progress and achievements – no matter how big or small. Whether it's a successful day in the field, a milestone reached, or simply overcoming a challenge that has been getting in your way, acknowledge and appreciate your own hard work. Oftentimes, we forget to give ourselves kudos for all we do. Yet, by taking pride in what we do and recognizing our accomplishments, we can boost our motivation and keep ourselves grounded.



Getting Involved with We Talk. We Grow.

If you're interested in contributing to shaping the mental health programming of our farming community, Farm Safety Nova Scotia is officially calling for expressions of interest to sit on our Farmer Wellness Advisory Committee.

The role of the Farmer Wellness Advisory Committee is to serve as a vital link between the farming community and the Farmer Wellness Coordinator. The committee will play an important role in helping to enhance the mental health programming provided to Nova Scotia farmers by gaining firsthand insights into their needs, preferences, and challenges.

Interested in learning more about the committee or what being a member would involve? Reach out to ahancock@nsfa-fane.ca for more information.

Normalizing farm safety from an early age

Article from the Canadian Agricultural Safety Association

Katie Keddy's approach to teaching her two sons about safety on the farm is simple: normalize it.

"We believe in teaching them lessons so that they grow up with safety as a culture on the farm instead of learning it as adults," explains Keddy.

Katie and her husband, Philip, are second-generation farmers growing sweet potatoes and strawberry nursery plants with her in-laws in Lakeville, NS. Being both a parent and involved with the farm, Keddy says she recognized early on the significance of making safety a regular part of conversations and way of thinking.

"Through the busyness of business, especially with farming, safety can be one of the things that falls by the wayside pretty easily if it's not made a priority," says Keddy, who is currently president of Farm Safety Nova Scotia. "I wanted to ensure that didn't happen because learning about safety as an adult requires more of a conscious effort when you haven't grown up with it, versus it just being instilled from a young age."

A unique aspect of agriculture is that farms and ranches are not just worksites but places where people also live. While other industries see victims of occupational injuries almost exclusively in the 18 to 65 age range, children account for a significant number of

injuries in agriculture. According to the latest findings of the Canadian Agricultural Injury Reporting, between 2011 and 2020, there were 58 fatal agriculture-related injuries among those aged 0 to 14.

"I've always made sure to have very black and white conversations with my kids about safety. If something could result in death, then we are very direct about it and very clear about the risks because there is so little room for error," says Keddy. "A single moment of inattention could mean the worst possible outcome."

When it comes to safety, everyone has a role to play. That's why one of the main lessons that Keddy and her husband have taught their sons – now nine and 11 – is that farm safety is everyone's responsibility. And that includes them.

"We have always taught our kids that they have as much responsibility to look out for other people on the farm as other people have to look out for them, and it is all of our jobs to look out for one another," Keddy explains, adding that prioritizing safety also plays a big part in attracting and retaining employees.

Being a parent and having a farm are both no easy feats. So, it's no surprise that when asked if there is a balancing act that comes with parenting and farm work, Keddy can't help but laugh. "The entire lifestyle is a balancing act," she says.

Farm kids tend to grow up fast, says Keddy, and certain expectations are often put on them, whether intentional or not, because of what they grow up around and experience.

"But even still, it is our responsibility as parents to not put them in an environment that could be unsafe and to give them the tools and knowledge necessary to keep them safe," she explains. "While you're trying to work, while you're trying to run a business, you're also trying to teach the kids the skills needed to be safe every day on the



farm. And that definitely does take some careful and conscious balancing."

There's no question that raising kids on a farm can bring many stressors and unknowns. However, despite the challenges, it's a lifestyle that Keddy says she would never change. But she notes that lifestyle comes with a responsibility that she and her husband share to instill safety in the next generation.

"The bottom line is that we want them to grow up knowing that safety really has to be your number one priority," says Keddy. "Because without it, you may not have a farm."

Every year, CASA raises awareness about the importance of safety on Canadian farms through Canadian Agricultural Safety Week (CASW), which takes during the third week of March. In 2024, CASW takes place March 10-16, and is sponsored by CN, Syngenta Canada, Canadian Canola Growers Association, Fertilizer Canada, and Parrish & Heimbecker.



Katie Keddy is the president of Farm Safety Nova Scotia. Keddy and her husband are second-generation farmers who have approached teaching farm safety to their two sons by normalizing it and making safety a regular part of conversations.

Onboarding New Employees in Agriculture

A Guide for Farmers

We are quickly approaching the time of year when most farms bring on additional employees for seasonal work. Whether hiring now, or any time of the year, it is important to establish a solid plan for onboarding your new employees.

Welcoming new employees to the world of agriculture is more than just showing them the ropes; it's about laying the groundwork for their success on the farm. From understanding safety protocols to getting acquainted with the farm's unique culture and practices, effective onboarding is essential for integrating new employees seamlessly into the operation.

Below is a list of 8 key elements to the onboarding process for agriculture jobs:

1. Prioritize Safety Training

Start the onboarding process with comprehensive safety training. Agriculture involves inherent risks including heavy machinery, unpredictable weather, and hazards related to working with animals and chemicals. Ensure that new employees understand these risks and know how to stay safe, protecting themselves and their coworkers.

2. Give an Overview of Farm Operations

Familiarize new hires with all aspects of the farm's operations. This could include crop cultivation, livestock management, irrigation systems, and equipment operation. Helping employees understand the different facets of the farm will allow them to grasp their role within the broader picture.

3. Review Environmental Awareness

Educate new employees about sustainable farming practices and environmental stewardship. Provide any information about your farm's efforts on soil conservation, water management, biodiversity preservation or reducing the farm's environmental footprint.

4. Provide Animal Welfare Training

For employees involved in livestock operations, prioritize training on proper animal handling, feeding, housing, health monitoring, and humane treatment practices. Emphasize the importance of ethical treatment of animals, which not only upholds farming standards but also enhances animal health and productivity.

5. Ensure Regulatory Compliance

Educate new hires about relevant agricultural regulations, permits, certifications, and safety standards. Compliance with legal requirements is essential for the farm's operations. Make sure employees understand and follow all necessary regulations. This is also the time to make sure that they know and understand your farm-specific policies and practices.

6. Review Crop Management Practices

Train employees involved in crop production on planting, cultivation, harvesting, and post-harvest handling techniques. Cover topics like pest and disease management, crop rotation, and soil fertility management. Equipping employees with these skills ensures efficient crop management.

7. Encourage Community Engagement

Foster engagement with the local agricultural community by encouraging employees to participate in industry events, workshops, and networking opportunities. Connecting with others in the field promotes professional development and industry knowledge sharing.

8. Provide Ongoing Training

Offer continuous learning opportunities to employees to keep them updated on the latest agricultural trends, technologies, and best practices. Regular



training sessions ensure that employees stay knowledgeable and adaptable in a dynamic agricultural environment.

Effective onboarding of new employees is crucial for the success of farming operations as it shapes their understanding of a farm's practices, values, and expectations. Prioritizing safety, comprehensive training, and fostering continuous learning and engagement are key strategies for equipping new hires with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in agriculture.

Additional Tools to Support Onboarding

Be sure to check out these resources to enhance your onboarding process and promote a safe and efficient work environment.

CAHRC Agri HR Toolkit

Visit cahrc-ccrha.ca to access their AgriHR Toolkit. As an NSFA member, you can access this for free by contacting the office for a login code. This Toolkit is customized for the agriculture industry and provides valuable information, including an onboarding checklist for your convenience.

Safety Onboarding

Farm Safety Nova Scotia has a variety of resources that are available to assist with onboarding. These include two onboarding videos, one for general operations and one that features horticulture specifics, that are recorded and available on our YouTube channel. The presentations used in the videos are also available in PowerPoint or PDF version for you to go through on your own with new employees, if desired. Additionally, the FSNS Farm Safety Plan includes a safety orientation checklist.



Cultivate Your Future Conference

On January 11, 2024 the Nova Scotia Young Farmers (NSYF) organization hosted a one-day conference at the Inn on Prince Hotel and Convention Centre in Truro, NS.

The Cultivate Your Future conference was focused on youth in agriculture as it explored the existing supports for young farmers in Nova Scotia, as well as those that could be added in the future. Approximately 90 attendees from across the province gathered to hear speakers and panelists, brainstorm on a variety of topics in table discussions, network and connect with tradeshow participants. The morning began with keynote speaker Lauren Van Ewyk, founding member of the National Farmer Mental Health Alliance and sheep farmer from southwestern Ontario. Lauren's compelling talk on "Your Farm's Greatest Asset" combined sobering statistics on the mental health of farmers with amusing anecdotes from her own experiences. And your farm's greatest asset? It's you!

Local farmer Cathy Munro of Bramble Hill Farm in Pictou County shared her pathway to agriculture; entering the industry by growing several products before settling on her current microgreen production model. Her experiences told the story of adaptation and response to market needs, and innovation through her new "Microgreen Kits" which make growing greens at home easy!

The conference included two brainstorming sessions, designed to capture feedback and suggestions for support for young farmers on topics including Public Trust, Environment & Climate Change, Land Access Options, Mentoring, Transition/Succession, Education & Training Supports, and Mental Health.

The panel discussion entitled "Navigating Your Way to Success" featured three young farmers who told their stories about how they came to their current roles in farming and the challenges they faced. The panelists included Blake Jennings (Bayview Poultry/ Blake's Pumpkin Jungle), Ryan McCarron (South River Ranch) and William Spurr (Spurr Brothers).

Keynote Speaker Benjamin Feagin Jr of Agritech North spoke about "Removing the Infrastructure and Technology Barriers to Year-Round Rural and Remote Community Food Sovereignty". His perspective from his own experiences in a remote community in northern Ontario gave an interesting glimpse of the food challenges faced in other parts



of the country and one model that is attempting to address those challenges.

The Hon. Greg Morrow, Minister of Agriculture, joined us in the afternoon with remarks that included support available from the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture and the upcoming 2024 Agriculture Youth Excellence Awards. Congratulations to this year's recipients announced at the NS Youth Council for Agriculture event, Jenna Burris, Blake Jennings and Amy Hill. The Minister was able to chat with a number of attendees during the social time following the presentations.

NSYF would like to thank the many sponsors who made this event possible through their generous support, as well as the tradeshow participants who joined us for the day. Many local farms and businesses also donated door prizes.

The Nova Scotia Young Farmers Annual General Meeting was held on January 11th, 2024, where the new board members were elected. Joining the board for another term is Rebecca Archibald, and new directors Chloe Fisher, Shamus Thomson and Rachel Sheffield were welcomed!

Canadian Young Farmers Forum Representative: Nicole van Dyk

2024 NSYF Executive



Sara Swinkels
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Allan Melvin
Secretary & Treasurer

Farm Ecosystems Provide Valuable Services On and Off the Farm

Farms make up an important part of the Nova Scotia landscape. They are unique ecosystems that provide many important ecological goods and services. Ecological goods and services are the benefits society derives from ecosystems. These are traditionally divided into four categories and agricultural ecosystems provide key services in all four:

- **Providing Services** – These types of services are the most obvious in agriculture, through providing food. Farms can also provide timber, fibre, and fuel.
- **Regulating Services** – These services are benefits gained through the natural processes in ecosystems. For example, healthy soil can filter water, protecting water supplies. A diverse landscape can provide pollination services, essential for many crops.
- **Supporting Services** – These services keep life on earth moving along – no small feat! – such as nutrient cycling and creating oxygen through photosynthesis. Without these services, ecosystems and organisms would cease to exist.
- **Cultural Services** – Our natural landscape helps shape our cultural identity. The less tangible cultural services can include the joy we get when out birdwatching or the physical benefits of getting out for a walk on a trail. Farm fields and their surroundings

can create a diverse habitat providing services in all these categories. There are many management practices that can enhance that habitat, and in doing so enhance the benefits to the environment, the services we gain from the farm ecosystem, and our enjoyment of our landscape.

Last spring the NS Department of Agriculture launched the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable CAP). One program that was introduced was the Resilient Agricultural Landscapes Program (RALP) to help fund practices that can maximize ecological goods and services.

The streams of funding under RALP include:

- 1. Reduced Tillage** – Reducing the frequency or intensity (or both) of tillage helps improve soil health by lowering the risk of erosion and preserving soil structure, can increase carbon sequestration, and improve soil biodiversity. Additional benefits are reduced time and costs that can be associated with tillage.
- 2. Pollinator Habitat** – By establishing pollinator strips or perennial cover a greater variety of food sources and habitats are provided to native and managed pollinators. Many important crops require pollination, but crops might only provide a food source for a few weeks out of the season. Having a diversity of food sources ensures many different species of pollinators can thrive. These areas of plant biodiversity can also support many other organisms such as birds and beneficial insects.
- 3. Buffers and Shelterbelts** – Planting trees, shrubs, and grasses along field margins helps sequester carbon and provide protection of crops, livestock, and structures from wind and cold damage. These plants also create habitat for all types of species. Planting along the edge of a watercourse (a riparian zone) additionally protects the water by reducing runoff to improve water quality and providing shade to help aquatic organisms.



Applications to RALP will be opening in Spring 2024. To find out more about the RALP program, including the eligible practices and requirements, you can check novascotia.ca/programs/resilient-agricultural-landscape or contact the RALP coordinator, Jeff Wentzell at Jeff.Wentzell@novascotia.ca. RALP funding also requires that you have a current Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) (completed in the past 5 years) or are in the process of getting your EFP. If you are interested in applying for funding through RALP, reach out to the EFP team at efp@nsfa-fane.ca to schedule your EFP now to ensure you have all your documentation before any program deadlines.

Spring Forward: Living Lab Updates

As the second year wraps up and we begin our third year of Living Lab – Nova Scotia, we are reflecting on insights gained from the previous seasons and planning for the next steps. One tenet of the Living Lab concept is to constantly evolve and adapt based on what we are learning on the ground and through feedback from producers. With the spring season fast approaching, there is a lineup of activities planned for each of the Best Management Practices (BMPs) throughout the year to improve and refine the Living Lab project.

The socio-economic researchers will be meeting with producers for each BMP to compile the costs and benefits of implementing these practices on their farms. This will provide valuable information to give producers a clearer picture of what it could mean for not only short term financial decisions around BMP adoption, but also the economic benefits of longer term sustainability. While finances can be a barrier to adopting new management practices, there are many other factors at play as well, and the researchers will be investigating those additional barriers alongside the economics.



Our cover cropping BMP is focused on investigating how cover crops can be integrated into horticulture and grain rotations (annual cropping systems). As spring approaches, there's lots to do to make sure we're prepared to be in the field as soon as the weather allows. This spring, we will be establishing new sites as well as maintaining and collecting data on our already established sites. At our new sites, we will be frost-seeding two of our treatments (single or double-cut clover) into a winter cereal; these are the only cover crops we can establish until the winter cereal is harvested in August. At our already established sites, we will be collecting data on the cover crops we seeded in the previous year before producers seed their horticulture or grain crops this spring. One of the challenges producers face when incorporating cover crops into their horticultural rotation is seeding fine-seeded crops such as onions and carrots into fields that have substantial cover crop biomass. We terminated half our cover crops in the fall and will be terminating the other half this spring and then tracking crop growth and yield over the season to try to answer this question.

The vineyard and orchard floor management BMP is using mow and blow technique and ground cover to manage orchards and vineyard laneways to increase carbon sequestration. Beginning this spring, additional data is being collected, focusing on biodiversity, vineyard productivity and the soil microbiome. This data will provide more insight into the additional benefits these BMPs could provide, such as pollination services and disease prevention.

The past season was the establishment of native trees and shrubs for our riparian buffer zone and shelterbelt BMP. Survivorship of those plants has helped us better understand the characteristics at each of our six sites. This supports a more customized approach to our field plans moving forward. For 2024, we are adapting to flooding tendencies at some sites by establishing plants that thrive in wet conditions (willows, in particular). We will deploy a new protocol for sampling of benthic macroinvertebrates in the water at our riparian sites. Artificial substrates will be positioned in the control and treatment reaches of the watercourses, left for six to eight weeks, and analyzed for biodiversity.

Three pastures have been established on horticulture fields for the land swap BMP. Each pasture was seeded with a perennial grass/legume mix. One pasture was established in late summer of 2022 and had enough growth to be grazed from late-May until early-October. Two other pastures were seeded in spring of 2023 and one of those was able to support some grazing later in the season. In 2024, all three pastures will be grazed. The third pasture, which is going to be grazed for the first time since it was seeded will have some logistics like fencing and access to water put in place. The producers are using either tumble wheels or step in posts and reels for rotational grazing. This season we will continue to monitor earthworm, wireworm, nematode and dung beetle populations. We will also delve into the performance of pastures, focusing on biomass production and quality.

In our effort to engage with and educate agricultural producers and the public about the Living Lab project, we are planning a series of interactive and informative events throughout the year. We'll host on-farm field days specifically designed for farmers and organize field events open to the public. We will be present at tradeshow and industry events so keep an eye out and ask us any questions you have – we love talking about the Living Lab project! There will also be a revamp of the Living Lab website, with content and updates about the project so stay tuned to keep informed on our progress.



Manure Application in Wet Conditions

New EFP factsheets cover alternative options during non-ideal times, assessment, plus guidelines on distances, rates and storage capacity.



Factsheets available at nsefp.ca/resources

Corporate Partner Highlight - Nova Scotia Crop & Livestock Insurance Commission

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APRIL



Halifax Exhibition Centre

Meet Your Farmer is getting ready to attend Saltscapes Expo and you can join us. Represent your farm or commodity by volunteering at our booth or by providing promotional materials. Interested or need more information? Contact April at amaclean@nsfa-fane.ca or 902-893-2293.

Corporate Partner Highlight - Nova Scotia Farm Loan Board

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Annual Meeting Save the Date



For more details on upcoming events and how to register, visit
nsfa-fane.ca/events



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