

Task Force on Environmental Payments

A CFFO Policy Statement

Whereas Ontario farmers are the stewards of much of Ontario's countryside as part of the business of farming. In addition to an abundance of food they produce environmental goods and services, often at the expense of their farm businesses while their share of the consumer food dollar continues to decline.

Whereas the Agricultural Advisory Team has advised¹ "that the Ontario Government does not provide direct compensation for loss of perceived future opportunities, but moves quickly to implement the other advice in this report to provide Ontario agriculture with the investment, support and recognition it requires to plan for future prosperity."

Whereas the Agricultural Advisory Team has advised "that the Ontario Government through the Ministries of Agriculture and Food, Environment, Natural Resources and Tourism and Recreation:

- Recognize and take seriously the environmental benefits agriculture contributes to society;
- Lead research with both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, to identify and assess what has been done in other jurisdictions; and
- Develop programs and financial incentives to farmers that recognize these societal contributions and which could provide an additional income stream for agriculture."

Whereas CFFO's vision for farming in Ontario, "Closer to the Heart," includes action #2:

- The establishment of a small charge on the retail sale of food in Ontario to pay for environmental services and joint farmer/consumer initiatives.
- The negotiation of a "Green Book" of annual environmental payments for identified societal environmental benefits to be funded by a small charge on food at retail.

Whereas the CFFO Provincial Council endorsed the advice of the Agricultural Advisory Team at its meeting of November 10, 2004.

¹ Agricultural Advisory Team advice can be found at www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/aat/advice.htm#compensation

Whereas the adoption of the Agricultural Advisory Team's advice in the proposed million-acre greenbelt and across Ontario can not be accomplished by imposing lines on a map and publishing paper regulations in Toronto.

Whereas Ontario needs a new policy direction for our countryside environment that replaces one-time payments for environmental improvements with whole farm annual payments for long-term stewardship that enhances our environment and supports economic renewal.

Whereas the potential of farming and rural landscapes to deliver environmental benefits and greenbelt services is enormous but society should not expect to receive them without paying for them.

Whereas there are few marketplace tools for valuing and paying for environmental benefits and greenbelt services that farmers and countryside landowners already provide or could provide.

Therefore be it resolved

That CFFO ask the Ontario government to establish a new task force composed of an independent chair and three representatives from each of the following groups: farmers, countryside residents and consumers; and

That the task force would carry a mandate to:

- Identify the environmental services (alternative land use services, greenbelt service, ecological services, landscape services) that are or can be provided by farmland and rural landscapes;
- Design a method of whole farm annual payments for environmental services throughout our countryside;
- Explore unique ways of raising the funds needed to pay for environmental services, including the idea of a small charge on the retail sale of all food; and
- Propose a management system for the delivery of environmental payments that takes into account farmer, countryside landowner and consumer interests.

*Adopted by Provincial Council
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
March 23, 2005*