

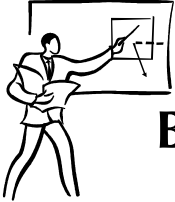


serving agriculture
since 1954

The CFFO Newsletter

*Published for members and friends of the
Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario*

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Back to the drawing board for provincial legislation

The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario believes the provincial government needs to go back to the drawing board on legislation designed to preserve and protect the environment.

The CFFO says that current provincial legislation and associated regulations, while well intentioned, are simply too burdensome and confusing for Ontario's farmers. The Federation maintains that the province urgently needs to evaluate the wide variety of rules, regulations and protocols that are being implemented, reduce their number and restructure them so that they are practical, affordable and meaningful to farm families and farm businesses.

The problem with the burden of provincial legislation began after the province adopted the Nutrient Management Act. Originally a commitment by Ontario's farmers to develop environmental farm plans, the initiative mutated into a piece of legislation that tries to do too much through a wide variety of strategies and plans. The CFFO has been critical of the legislation's approach to compliance, which focuses on monitoring and results in paper trails rather than actual initiatives that improve agriculture's relationship to the environment. Farmers are expected to undertake a lot of activities and accept permanent additional costs for very modest gains for the environment.

"The Nutrient Management Act, by itself, has problems enough but there are a host of other initiatives that have created a piecemeal, fragmented and convoluted approach to agricultural-environmental stewardship," says John Kikkert, the CFFO's President. "In addition to the Act are new pieces of legislation dealing with safe drinking water, source water protection, municipal amalgamations, species at risk, property assessments, a revised Provincial Policy Statement under the Planning Act, Ontario's Rural Plan, Places to Grow in the Greater Golden Horseshoe, Agricultural Advisory Team Advice and the Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt."

As an alternative to the province's legislative approach, the CFFO is advocating the adoption of a streamlined stewardship framework for regulating agriculture's impact on the environment. This framework advocates the following steps:

- Do more with land use planning. Encourage municipal bylaws that help farm developments physically fit the local environment and community. That way, fewer rules about the management of farms will be needed.

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- Repeal the Nutrient Management Act and replace it with an Agricultural-Environmental Standards of Operation Act and use it to create a few province-wide standards.
- Establish one environmental risk and opportunity assessment that is comprehensive through including off-farm factors such as: quality of water in streams and proximity to recharge areas.
- Encourage all farmers to develop action plans for specific reductions in risks through physical or management changes. All such plans should be cost-shared by the public.
- Establish whole-farm annual environmental payments for the ecological services that farmers deliver in addition to an abundance of food.

For a copy of the eight-page document, *A Stewardship Framework for Agricultural-Environmental Regulation*, contact the CFFO office, or download it yourself from www.christianfarmers.org.

“One Farm Voice”

Farmers have been talking about “One Farm Voice” to deliver messages to politicians and policy-makers. And our members have been asking where the CFFO stands on this idea.

The CFFO is committed to working with other farm organizations to deliver common messages on appropriate actions required from government. We will stand with other farm organizations on actions of mutual agreement. However, we have strong reservations about moving beyond one common message to one common farm organization.

The CFFO is not in favour of combining existing provincial farm organizations into only one farm organization. We maintain that Ontario is far too diverse to have only one farm organization. Farmers in Ontario produce an incredible array of commodities through a wide variety of marketing approaches. Some farmers prefer wide open markets with little government interference, while others prefer the security of regulated marketing. It's highly

unlikely that Ontario's diversity can be accommodated in any singular farm organization.

That being said, there are definite benefits Ontario farm groups can receive from working closer together. For one, costs are reduced to farmers. In addition, certain common initiatives are important to all farmers. Ontario has developed its own unique approach to delivering common messages and cost-cutting through coalitions. Ontario's farmers are well represented through coalitions like the Ontario Farm Environmental Coalition, the Ontario Farm Animal Council, the Agricultural Odyssey Group, the President's Council and many others.

The CFFO has long been supportive of creating an umbrella organization for farmers based on the current diversity among Ontario farm groups. If and when a discussion begins on how that umbrella organization might be structured, the CFFO maintains that the current President's Council, a spin-off from the Agricultural Odyssey Group, could serve as a place to begin. The Council would need to be structured in such a way that full participation is guaranteed for all Ontario farm groups in determining common messages and strategies.

The CFFO is in favour of “One Farm Voice” --- as long as it is structured to build unity based on diversity and full participation. Until that day comes, we will work cooperatively when and where we can with other farm groups on matters of interest to our members.

Public Demonstrations

The CFFO has a long history of working cooperatively --- rather than in an adversarial fashion --- with municipal, provincial and federal governments. This stems from a biblical principle that says citizens need to be in proper relationship to governing authorities. In addition, we have found over our history that public demonstrations tend to highlight problems rather than solutions.

In this regard, the CFFO's Provincial Council adopted the following two resolutions in 1978:

THAT the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, when it has identified an issue of public justice that requires a change in some public policy, will draw the matter to public attention via letter writing, brief presentation, news releases, and

THAT if the above does not influence society to make a change, then the CFFO, where opportunity exists, will apply to the appropriate regulatory body, to officers of our governments, or to the courts of law for a ruling on the justness of the issue of public justice in question.

The CFFO has largely used that approach ever since. And it has relied upon the power of a good idea delivered at the right time. We still believe that a commitment to long-term thinking delivers a power of influence that will last much longer than the latest tractor demonstration.

That being said, participation in public demonstrations has taken place among CFFO members in the past and will continue in the future. But we do our best to ensure that non-violent means are used and that the public is neither endangered nor inconvenienced. It remains one of our least-preferred methods of drawing the public's attention to farm issues. And as is true of every federation, our individual district associations are free to make their own decisions on participation in public demonstrations. In the final analysis, the CFFO believes that the power of clear thinking, mutual respect, dialogue and a shared commitment to finding solutions go further with governments than public demonstrations.

Retaining the right to save and use seed



The Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario believes that plant breeding companies should not be allowed to prevent farmers from saving and using their own seeds.

The agricultural community has been debating this

issue since the Canadian Food Inspection Agency recently began proposing amendments to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act. The government agency is proposing the amendments to enable Canada to ratify an international agreement called the International Union for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants.

"The CFFO supports the idea of universal access to new varieties of plants and seeds, with a legislated right for plant breeders to receive a royalty fee for a certain period of time," says John Kikkert, President of the CFFO. "However, we strongly object to plant breeders having exclusive rights under the PBR Act. These exclusive rights for plant breeders are not necessary for guaranteeing a reasonable return on their research."

The CFFO is concerned that exclusive rights not only guarantee plant breeders the ability to collect a royalty when the seed is originally sold, but could conceivably restrict universal access to the new variety. According to the CFFO, an exclusive right for individuals or firms to use plant life degrades the intrinsic value of that life form and lays a claim on the created environment that goes far beyond our role as stewards.

Kikkert made the comments at a meeting of the CFFO's Provincial Council. At that meeting, delegates from across the Federation's 22 districts endorsed a new position statement in response to the CFIA's proposed amendments. The CFFO position statement makes the following points:

- The CFFO supports legislation that provides for the payment of a compulsory license fee to breeders by all those who wish to use a new life form during its first seven years of registration. As such, it objects to proposed PBR Act amendments to extend the duration of protection on all plant varieties, including vines, forest, fruit and ornamental trees and rootstock.
- The CFFO supports the continued right of farmers to save and use their own seed. Saving propagating material of a protected variety for a farmer's own use should not be against the law.

- The CFFO supports the extension of compulsory licensing to essentially derived varieties, defined as predominately derived from the initial variety.
- The CFFO objects to the extension of plant breeders rights to include the production, reproduction, conditioning, exporting, importing and stocking of propagating material, the harvested material, and the products of harvested material.
- The CFFO objects to the removal from the international agreement of a ban on double protection for plant breeders --- protection under both the PBR Act and the Patent Act.

For a full copy of the CFFO position statement, please log on to the Federation's website at www.christianfarmers.org.

Executive Board Business



The CFFO Executive Board regularly deals with a wide variety of items regarding the governance of the organization. Over the past few months those items have included:

- Discussed the CFFO's position on "one farm voice" and possible participation in a public rally at Queen's Park.
- Reviewed a number of draft public policy position statements that were circulated to the Board's stewardship and commodity committees. After review, the position statements were either sent back to committees for further work or circulated to Provincial Council for debate and potential adoption.
- Approval was given for the 2005 CFFO Seminar Series. The theme of the series is based on the idea of farmers needing to get a fair share of the consumer food dollar. In addition to the seminar series, staff was also directed to begin drafting position statements on farm labour issues, the role of municipalities in agriculture and source water concerns.
- Adopted a new CFFO Privacy Policy and appointed a Privacy Officer.
- Conducted a review of the risks and opportunities for the CFFO. As a result, the Board is also

considering strategies for minimizing risk to the organization and taking advantage of opportunities.

"Elections"

Two directors have been elected to the Executive Board of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario.

Elected to the organization's board are Gerald Poechman and Peter Payne. They were elected during a recent meeting of the CFFO's Provincial Council, a gathering of farmers from 22 district associations across Ontario.

Gerald Poechman, a 47-year-old egg, beef and cash crop farmer from Hanover, will be serving his third term on the CFFO board. Poechman has wide experience in promoting ecological farming, was a founding member and past president of OntarBio Co-op, and successfully launched certified organic eggs into the Canadian market. In addition, Poechman is an active member of his local church, the Catholic Rural Life Conference and Queen Bush Rural Ministries. He also has an agricultural diploma from Centralia College and is an alumnus of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program. Poechman farms together with his wife Marlene.

Peter Payne, a 63-year-old cow-calf farmer from near Reaboro, will be serving his second term on the CFFO board. Payne has farmed for 40 years and has also served in the Canadian Armed Forces for 25 years. Teaching a wide variety of courses at Sir Sanford Fleming in Peterborough, Payne has educational degrees from the Royal Military College in Kingston, and from Central Michigan University. Active in his local church, Payne farms together with his wife Gail.

The newly-elected directors join incumbent directors Terry Kuipers, from Alymer, Clarence Nywening, from Thamesville, and Jane Kapteyn, from Coburg. Rounding out the CFFO board are President John Kikkert, from Smithville, and vice presidents Henry Stevens, from Palmerston, and Jenny Denhartog, from Arthur. Kikkert, Stevens and Denhartog were acclaimed at the recent CFFO convention.

District News

Leadership Development



Early this year, leadership development sessions were conducted for directors of the CFFO's district associations. Carried out among the majority of the Federation's district associations, the meetings featured an overview of a handbook created especially for district leadership. These leadership development sessions were especially helpful for new board members and also served as a timely review for the more seasoned. Brainstorming sessions netted several new ideas and some time was set aside for planning local annual meetings, banquets, and setting dates for summer events.

Chatham-Kent and Essex CFA members met in the Tilbury Arena to learn about reducing their risks from trespassers and securing their farm properties from theft and vandalism. Representatives from the local Ontario Provincial Police detachment and the Swain Brothers security firm provided excellent insights and practical advice. In addition, a representative from the Kent & Essex Mutual Insurance Company explained the steps involved in making a claim and avoiding disagreements. The meeting featured lots of opportunity for questions. Good food and interesting displays added to the overall success of this event.

Dufferin-Wellington CFA held an information meeting featuring CFFO staff member Elbert van Donkersgoed on the topic of how Ontario is re-inventing the countryside. The meeting also gave local members an opportunity to grapple with ways of finding much-needed breathing space in the ever-growing swamp of government-initiated rules and regulations related to urban sprawl, manure management, and ensuring safety for drinking water.

Essex CFA recently hosted a special meeting focusing on farm labour issues in the greenhouse, fruit and vegetable sectors. Presenters were CFFO President John Kikkert and CFFO staff member Elbert van Donkersgoed. The Federation representatives pointed out that the CFFO believes that while labour

needs to be treated fairly, disruptions of work on farms is intolerable. They also pointed out that the challenge remaining for the industry is to work toward a productive labour force in a non-adversarial workplace setting. Essex CFA is holding its annual business meeting in March.

Grey Bruce CFA members listened to Ben and Erna Falk, semi-retired fruit farmers from Niagara-on-the-Lake, tell a gripping, personal story about their experiences in life in a Siberian Mennonite community after Perestroika. Their slide presentation shows pictures of church, school, farming, and life within the village. Plans are in the making for a local CFFO presence at the Chesley Agrifair in early April.

The **Halton-Waterloo-Wellington South** steering committee has set March 23 as the date for a general information meeting at the Gencor facilities, just North of Guelph. This meeting is for area members to determine, in part, the level of interest in starting a local district association. Staff member Elbert van Donkersgoed will lead a discussion on the impact of the Greenbelt on farming in the region.

Niagara CFA is planning their annual meeting for March 29, which will feature a panel presentation focusing on how Ontario appears to be reinventing the countryside by introducing all kinds of new rules and regulations to stop urban sprawl, manage manure, and safeguarding our drinking water.

Quinte CFA organized a public information meeting providing farmers with updates on nutrient management protocols, funding and compliance issues. The local Agricultural Environmental Officer from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and the Nutrient Management Specialist from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food presented helpful information and a comprehensive overview of the new system about to be introduced. Members plan to be involved again in staffing a booth at the Hastings Farm Show this summer.

Simcoe County CFA co-sponsored the Agknowledge Forum in early February. The annual

event starts at mid-afternoon and ends with a catered, complimentary dinner, sponsored by local suppliers. The main theme of this year's event was "Ontario's Greenbelt Protection Plan ~ how will it affect you?" The meeting featured an impressive line-up of speakers including Joanne Davies, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing; Bob Bedggood, member of the Agricultural Advisory Team; Mary Lou Garr, agriculture representative on the Greenbelt Task Force; and CFFO staff member Elbert van Donkersgoed. A local realtor talked about the impact of the Greenbelt on farmland values and an area farmer shared his personal experience with development encroaching on his farmland. The district association's annual meeting, scheduled for early March, will focus on quotas and supply management, including a review of the marketing system's history and the place for small operations without quotas.

St. Lawrence - Ottawa Valley CFA plans to hold its annual meeting in late February, including lunch, at the Kemptville Agricultural College. CFFO staff member, Elbert van Donkersgoed, will address the timely issue of how Ontario is currently reinventing the countryside with a barrage of new rules and regulations governing manure management, protection of drinking water, and urban sprawl. The district association has also sent out a letter to its members, complete with a survey, asking if they would like an opportunity to attend luncheon meetings throughout the large district. The local board has also been involved in separate meetings with both the provincial and federal ministers of agriculture during the past year.

Wellington CFA members attended an information evening in November on nutrient management protocols, funding and compliance issues. Two local Ontario Ministry of Environment and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food staffers outlined the basic facts of the new plan with an effective skit. District Coordinator for the Wellington CFA association, Jenny Denhartog, keeps the local board informed of current issues, assists with organizing meetings and sends out an occasional newsletter. At the next local information meeting, Bobby Seeber,

Senior Policy Advisor with OMAF, will be speaking on "Agricultural Trade Policy: the Effect on our Farms."

Wentworth-Brant CFA experienced a record turnout, including several visitors and a lively discussion, at its recent autumn meeting with CFFO staff member, Elbert van Donkersgoed. He spoke on the topic: "Ontario is Reinventing Our Countryside ~ What about Farming?" There was considerable interest in the impact of Greenbelt legislation on local agriculture. The annual business meeting is scheduled for early March, and will feature a joint presentation by local OME and OMAF officers on nutrient management protocols, funding and compliance issues.

CFFO at Farm Shows

As in previous years, CFFO plans to have displays at the following major farm shows: *East Central Farm Show* in Peterborough, March 3 & 4; *Ottawa Valley Farm Show*, March 15-17; and *Northeastern Ontario Agricultural Conference and Farm Show* in New Liskeard, April 1 & 2. This year, show-goers will again be challenged to name a number of 'mostly new-to-them' corporate logos, complete with prizes for the winners. Logos and qualifying questions will differ from show to show in order to keep visitors on their toes. If you plan to attend, enjoy meeting the public and can afford a couple of hours at a show near you, Martin Oldengarm would love to hear from you. By the way, free passes are part of the deal for those volunteering in the CFFO booth, and maybe even a free coffee.

Membership Drive

The CFFO is looking to expand its membership and is calling upon our district associations for help. During 2005, the CFFO Executive Board is challenging each district association to sign up five new members. Here is the simple math: If each of our 22 district associations signs up five new members, the CFFO will gain 110 members. We also encourage individual members to talk with their neighbours about membership in the CFFO. If anyone requires coaching or written materials, please contact Martin Oldengarm, our Field Services Manager. He can be reached at 519-568-8332.

Insurance Program for Members

CFFO members and supporters will be offered the Agrilife Insurance Program this spring. Endorsed by the CFFO, and offered by Manulife Financial, this optional program will include, Term Life, Accident Protection, Disability Income Protection and Extended Health Care & Dental. When the program is ready to roll, both the CFFO and Manulife will be providing more information on program details and contact information for members requiring answers for their insurance questions.

In preparation for offering these products to members, the CFFO now has to comply with federal government privacy legislation. The legislation is called the *Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act*. The purpose of this Act, in general terms, is to regulate the private sector's collection, use and disclosure of personal information.

Each member or supporter will be receiving a notice of the CFFO's privacy policy along with his or her receipt for membership fees. If you have any questions regarding the CFFO's privacy policy, if you do not wish to receive information about services or products, if you wish to withdraw your consent to any uses and disclosures, or if you wish to obtain a copy of our privacy policy, please contact:

CFFO Privacy Officer

5653 Hwy 6 North, RR5
 Guelph, ON N1H 6J2
 Ph: 519-837-1620 Fax: 519-824-1835
 Email: cfomail@christianfarmers.org

GET INVOLVED !

There is room for you to become involved in the CFFO's development of policy options for farming.

If you have a desire to address the issues of the day, strongly consider attending one of the CFFO's Stewardship and Policy Committees. These committees meet throughout the year in Guelph and Napanee. Not only will you become better informed, you'll also be helping the CFFO to chart new policy directions that will benefit all farmers.

To get involved, or to be added to our mailing list for committee mailings, contact Mary Visser Kerr in the CFFO office.

She can be reached at 519-837-1620, or by emailing to mary@christianfarmers.org



UPCOMING MEETINGS

STEWARDSHIP & Policy W. GENCOR, GUELPH	MAR 3, 2005
STEWARDSHIP & Policy E. NAPANEE LEGION HALL	MAR 4, 2005
EXECUTIVE BOARD GUELPH	MAR 8, 2005
QUOTA SUPPLY MANAGEMENT	MAR 10, 2005
PROVINCIAL COUNCIL GUELPH	MAR 23, 2005
CFFO CONVENTION	Nov. 25, 2005

CFFO SEMINAR SERIES 2005

What about the Farmers' Fair Share?

Managing the Food Chain - Exploring the Options for Farmers as Strategic Partners

#	DATE	LOCATION	MEETING PLACE	DISTRICT ASSOCIATION
7	Mon. Mar. 7	SEAFORTH	<u>Seaforth District Community Centre</u> Take E. William Street north off Hwy. 8 - at UPI gas bar. Turn east on to Duke, Seaforth, ON	Huron Perth
8	Wed. Mar. 9	MT. ELGIN	<u>Mt. Elgin Community Centre</u> Mt. Elgin, ON	Elgin Oxford
9	Fri. Mar. 11	KEADY	<u>Keady Community Centre</u> Keady, ON	Grey-Bruce
10	Mon. Mar. 21	LAUREL	<u>Amaranth Municipal Hall</u> On County Rd. 10, just west of Laurel, ON	Dufferin-Well.
11	Tues. April 5	RENFREW	<u>Renfrew Armouries</u> Galbraith Room (upstairs) Renfrew, ON	Renfrew-Lanark
12	Wed. April 6	KEMPTVILLE	<u>Kemptville Agricultural College</u> Parish Building, Rm. 108 Kemptville, ON	St. Lawrence-Ottawa Valley

- Sessions will run from 10:00 A.M. - 3:30 P.M. All sessions are open to anyone from anywhere.
- Registration Fee - \$20 per person at the door - includes lunch. **PLEASE PRE-REGISTER**



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