



Long-Term Thinking
for Today's Issues

The CFFO Newsletter

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Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario*

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Our President is the “Tidbit Man”

The Ontario Farmer recently ran a column by Lisa Boonstoppel-Pot on a speech by CFFO President, John Kikkert. The column is reprinted here, with permission.

I keep thinking of him as the Tidbit man although I suppose the moniker isn't fair since I've only heard him speak once. However, all the 'tidbits' of information he fed me that night have filled my mind with lots of ideas to chew on.

John Kikkert is the man I am talking about. He is the President of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and was the main speaker at our local district's annual meeting. The food was good and the company was great but I later learned that the main draw of the evening was Kikkert himself, a voluble man eager to share things that have fascinated him. He presented his tidbits in a way that challenged Farmer Freddy and myself to consider why do we farm, and, are we going to be able to meet the demands of a changing consumer and the even more shifting global marketplace?

It began with his comment about apples in China. “Did you know that Loblaw's buys all its apples from China even though we have lots here in Ontario?” As surreal as that sounded, Kikkert explained that for multinational companies, it's all about sourcing enough product at the cheapest price. If a supplier can purchase cheap apples from China to run through their already established transportation and distributorship systems, then that's where they get them.

“Today, hardly anyone in Ontario grows roses,” said Kikkert. Roses used to be a greenhouse owner's money maker but now the Ecuadorians make the profit from roses. “Ecuador has the cheap labour and right climate.” In today's international business scene, the roses are harvested, boxed, loaded into planes, land in North America at six a.m. and are ready for distribution.

Farming has CHANGED. The tidbit man told us days of producing food and taking what the market gives is over. Growing corn and soybeans when the world doesn't want them is foolish.

Still, there's a sense of unfair play when other countries' governments support their farmers with subsidies and Canadian politicians develop policies based on world markets. Does the government care? Does it have a food policy? The answer is a resounding “no” said Kikkert.

Backing up Kikkert's tidbits was CFFO director Gerald Poechman who said the government does have a food policy. It's this: “If you aren't the cheapest producer, get out!”

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Other tidbits Kikkert dished out to the annual meeting attendees included:

“There are 20 individuals who got over \$1,000,000 for CAIS program last year. Will society support that?”

“The financing from banks has driven quota prices. Yet it’s estimated the break even point of chicken quota is 99 years and dairy is 30 years.”

“As countries get more prosperous, families have fewer children. It’s predicted that by 2040, the population will be in decline. Yet, we are always trying to produce more food. Why?”

Kikkert made it clear that change is needed, not just from government but from the farmers themselves. Yet, he acknowledged why change is so hard, especially for farmers.

“Farming for us has been a lifestyle. We had the blessings of freedom and the love of the land. Also, we loved to do our part in taking care of the creation that the Lord gave us. For us to change doesn’t just involve business, it involves a lifestyle, our homes and our families.”

Still, with all the tidbits Kikkert threw out about globalization in farming, change is what may be required to protect the very things we cherish.

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:

- Endorsed recommendations from the Board’s public policy committee regarding position statements to be developed over the coming months.
- Reviewed and accepted the audited financial statements for 2005.
- Provided training for new Board members and appointed Lorne Small as CFFO treasurer and Gerald Poechman as secretary. In addition, new Board member, Glen Duff, made a presentation on “issues management” to the full Board.
- Heard reports from Board members who serve as CFFO representatives to the various agricultural and rural coalitions in which the organization is involved. Reviewed correspondence from the farm community and heard reports on operational details from staff members.

CFFO Convention 2006

Date: Friday, November 10, 2006

Location: Guelph

Special Guest Speaker: Tony Campolo

Dr. Campolo is an ordained minister, presently recognized as an associate pastor of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church in West Philadelphia. He is a media commentator on religious, social and political matters, having guested on television programs like *Nightline*, *Crossfire*, *Politically Incorrect*, *The Charlie Rose Show*, *Larry King Live* and *CNN News*. He co-hosted his own television series, *Hashing It Out*, on the Odyssey Network, and presently hosts *From Across the Pond*, a weekly program on the Premier Radio Network in England and more.



**Mark your calendars for November 10, 2006.
You won’t want to miss this event!**

District News



Chatham-Kent

Darrel Van Sickle, from a local, newly-launched Christian radio station, was the guest speaker at the annual meeting and banquet. Bev Shipley, the MP for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, also attended. In district association business, two members were elected to the local board. Directors plan to extend an invitation to the local Federation of Agriculture and National Farmers Union to discuss matters of common interest. A summer picnic is scheduled, featuring a pig roast. The Board also plans to award a scholarship in the near future.

Dufferin-Wellington

Dr. Peter VanderZaag spoke about his personal experiences in development work throughout North Korea at the district association's annual membership meeting. VanderZaag also talked about World Trade issues and his passion for the CFFO's *Vision for Agriculture*. Two new members were elected to the local board. Plans are in the making for the annual summer social sometime in July.

East Central

Chris Attema, Water Specialist for the Ontario Sheep Marketing Agency, brought members up to date on the Clean Water Act at a recent information meeting. At a later meeting, John Kikkert, CFFO President, engaged the local membership in a wide-ranging discussion on current issues such as trade, supply management, marketing and branding. District association elections saw the retirement of two directors, who had served six years each, and one new elected member. Plans are to hold the now traditional annual picnics in July and August --- one in the east and one in the west. The district association has also committed to having an information booth at the International Plowing Match in Peterborough in mid-September.

Essex

Bob Kerr, a beef producer from Chatham-Kent specializing in local grass-fed beef, spoke recently on the niche marketing of 'local food'. He involved his

audience in a brainstorming session on local marketing trends as part of his presentation. The Leamington Dock Restaurant, where the meeting was held, served a delicious buffet dinner of local beef and chicken. Each table of guests was invited to participate in a taste test of grass-fed and traditionally grain-fed beef. The owner of the restaurant caters warm meals of local product to local businesses that have employees stay late at work, plus places vending machines at the local H.J. Heinz Company. The "Circle of Friends" from St. Thomas provided the entertainment for the evening.

Grey-Bruce

Gerald Poechman, Director, CFFO Executive Board, answered agriculture-related questions at the district association's annual meeting, held in Keady. Dick Evans, a retired minister, was the guest speaker and gave an instructive presentation on "Longing, Belonging, and So Long." Evans noted that the farm is a place for him/us to belong, even though we will never be totally content on this earth. In other district association business, the association plans to host a booth at the Chesley Agri-Fair. Finally, three guest speakers spoke recently at a mid-April meeting on a variety of timely topics. Bobby Seeber, Senior Policy Advisor, OMAFRA, gave an update on the current WTO talks, while Jayne Dietrich, Bruce County OSCIA, explained the new Environmental Farm Plan. A presentation by Melot Creek Consulting (Kincardine Regional Producers Association) outlined a proposed new lamb & veal-processing co-op for the Kincardine region.

Haldimand-Norfolk

Lisa Boonstoppel-Pot, author of the "Adventures on the Farm" column in the Ontario Farmer, was the featured speaker at this year's Annual Banquet. Approximately 75 members attended this event, including Haldimand Mayor Marie Trainer, local MP Toby Barrett and representatives from the local OFA, CFFO Executive Board and staff.

Huron

John Kikkert, the CFFO President, spoke on the future of agriculture at the district association's

annual meeting and banquet. His presentation featured information on the WTO talks, supply management, marketing and branding. Nearly 50 members, including representatives from the local Federation of Agriculture, enjoyed interaction with the speaker. In other district association business, the annual BBQ is planned for August. Local board members have also attended different meetings in Huron County on Source Water Protection, Growing Your Opportunities, and other meetings organized by the Conservation Authority.

Middlesex

The Clean Water Act was the main topic at a local information meeting featuring Chris Tasker, of the Upper Thames Conservation Authority and Sam Bradshaw, of Ontario Pork. They explained how the legislation may/will impact normal farming practices and how this could lead to some difficulties in the future. Both stressed the importance of clean water, but at the same time acknowledged some concern with the current approach of these regulations and the actual representation from agriculture on the local committees.

Northeastern Ontario

This year's annual meeting was held again on three consecutive days in late March in Thessalon, Little Current, and New Liskeard. In addition to the regular business session, CFFO Executive Board member Peter Payne, engaged members in an "Open Forum" on such issues as health & safety on the farm, nutrient management, CAIS, the problem of predation and farm safety nets.

Oxford

District association president Nico Van Den Akker, described the association's annual meeting, with Ben and Erna Falk as guest presenters, as the "best we've ever had!" Approximately 30 people enjoyed 'travelling' with the Falks on their past, incredible journeys to a Mennonite settlement in the heart of Siberia. Guests for the evening included local MPP Ernie Hardeman. Three new board members were elected. The board is planning a summer BBQ in June. For the end of May, a meeting will be held

with local MP Dave MacKenzie to discuss a wide range of pressing farming issues. Invitations will be extended to local farm leaders and representatives from area commodity groups.

Perth

At a recent 'Open Forum,' former CFFO staff member Elbert van Donkersgoed, led a lively brainstorming session on policies currently under discussion within the CFFO. David Murray, local director on the Dairy Farmers of Ontario Board, commented on WTO talks. Congratulations are in order for CFFO member Bob Reid, and the Mornington Heritage (goat's milk) Cheese and Dairy Co-op in Milbank, for recently obtaining Federal certification.

Quinte

Keith Taylor, of Quinte Conservation, was the guest speaker at the district association's annual meeting and gave an overview of the Clean Water Act, the role Quinte Conservation will play through it, and what it actually means on the farm. Many questions were answered during the discussion following his presentation. There were no nominations for new board members at this time but Henry Eigenbrood was thanked for his service on the local board for the past number of years. The district association plans to set up a booth at the Hastings Plowing Match & Farm Show in August, as well as organize a picnic for late summer.

Rainy River

At the annual meeting, Gary Sliworsky, Agricultural Representative from the Emo OMAFRA office, spoke on the Nutrient Management Plan/Strategy and the Source Water Protection Act. He focused his remarks on the challenges of applying the proposed new regulations on a province-wide basis. Sliworsky feels consideration must be given to the unique circumstances for the NW region, such as soil types, climate (longer and colder winters), and higher building costs. Other discussion items included attracting new farmers to the region, especially dairy farmers, and selling from the farm-gate or setting up farmers' markets.

Renfrew-Lanark

Former CFFO staff member, Elbert vanDonkersgoed, was the main speaker at the district association's annual meeting. His topic, "Energy Stewardship: Harvesting the Sun, Water, and Wind," created a good deal of discussion about various possibilities for more energy self-sufficiency on the farm. During the business session, one new board member was elected. Some local members volunteered their time at the CFFO display at the Ottawa Valley Farm Show in March. Plans are to have a social event sometime in late summer.

Simcoe County

The district association's annual luncheon meeting featured recently-elected CFFO director Glen Duff, along with representatives from two local conservation authorities and Garfield Dunlop, Joseph Tascona and Jim Wilson (three local MPP's). All of them were active participants in an animated discussion on the Source Water Protection Act. Local MPP for Simcoe-Grey, Jim Wilson, presented the local district association board with a plaque of merit. An afternoon session consisted of a variety of shorter presentations on agri-tourism, including local CFFO members, Geraldine & Ken Rounds from *Rounds Ranch* near Elmvale.

St. Lawrence-Ottawa Valley

Local board members joined with members from the Renfrew Lanark CFA to staff the CFFO booth at the Ottawa Valley Farm Show. Following a brief business session at the annual membership meeting, Peter Payne, Director, CFFO Executive Board, presented a Federation update, including current policy involvements. Guest speaker Angela Coleman, of the South Nation River Conservation Office, and Sommer Casgrain-Robertson, of the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority, spoke on government regulations for managing clean drinking water and private wells on the farm. Both stressed the need for knowledgeable farmers to sit on the various working groups. John Newman, a director of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, explained the steps needed to re-open the border for live animals into the USA

and the beef industry's response to the Clean Water Act. The local board is considering ways of improving communications within their rather large district, including the use of Internet/e-mail.

Thunder Bay

Harold Penner, the Manitoba Coordinator for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, spoke on "Managing a Successful Growing Project." His presentation netted almost instant results with local members pledging to grow 50 acres of barley for this worthy cause. One additional board member was appointed during the business meeting.

Wellington

Spencer Henson, an Agricultural Economist, University of Guelph, was the main speaker at the annual meeting and banquet. His presentation on consumer concerns about perceived food and safety issues was followed by a very lively discussion. Present at the meeting was local MPP Ted Arnott. There was excellent media coverage of the meeting in three local newspapers. One new board member was elected. Local board members reportedly had a very productive meeting with local MP Mike Chong with the discussion focusing mainly on WTO talks, supply management and concerns about the 'Terminator gene' technology. The annual BBQ is scheduled for mid-July.

Wentworth-Brant

Cal Bombay, of 100 Huntley Street Ministries and long-time missionary in Africa, was the guest speaker for the annual spring banquet. He introduced his listeners to his 'farming projects' in Southern Sudan and shared his own personal challenge of how to bridge the vast difference between our affluence and Sudan's hardship. Discussion was very animated and the traffic at his display, the sales of his books, and the individual dialogue afterwards was phenomenal. There is an opportunity for farmer-volunteers to help manage the four farms he has set up in the Sudan. In other district association business, two board members represented the local association, by invitation, at the Hamilton-Wentworth Farmers Association meeting, sponsored by the local OFA.

Thanks, Elbert, for 35 years

Long-time staff member, Elbert van Donkersgoed, moves on to a new challenge promoting agriculture in the Greater Toronto Area

On Feb. 6, 1971, Elbert van Donkersgoed's wife read a "help wanted" ad out loud to him. He remembers the date because within days he knew he'd heard his life's calling.

For 35 years van Donkersgoed has been one of the guiding forces behind the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario (CFFO). Founded in 1954 by Dutch immigrants, it was, in 1971, barely afloat. The CFFO hired van Donkersgoed — its first full-time staff member — gave him 100 names, \$20 in the bank and a mandate: "Figure out how to make this organization fly."

He did. Van Donkersgoed began by going from farm to farm with a simple pitch: "I'm inviting you to help build an organization that will be a blessing to agriculture in Ontario and to the whole Ontario community."

As a high school student, van Donkersgoed had attended CFFO meetings with his father. He has always been convinced its fundamental organizing principle can change public policy: "We step back, as Christians, from the hurly burly of daily farm life to sort out the farm challenges of the day. Then we step forward together to put forth a solution."

Today more than 4,000 members of the CFFO step back in 22 district associations across Ontario. When they step forward their policy recommendations are taken seriously. Provincial and national agriculture officials regularly consult van Donkersgoed, the CFFO's strategic policy adviser

The organization, for example, was one of the first to call for the protection of farmland from urban encroachment. First a municipality at a time, then the province as a whole, enacted zoning ordinances limiting what landowners can do with farmland.

Another issue on which the CFFO has raised a voice is the effect of intensive agriculture technologies. "We have driven significant change in how big a footprint agriculture leaves on the environment," van Donkersgoed said.

Lately the CFFO has been engaged in some serious soul-searching. "We're realizing that a lot of the things we've been doing has given us Band-Aids, not solutions for the future," van Donkersgoed said.

He notes that the number of farms in Canada shrinks each year and the net income of Canadian farms, taken as a whole, is zero. That's understandable, van Donkersgoed said. "We've created a farming structure that's so focused on producing food in quantities as large as possible, as efficiently as possible that we're not producing the food people want to eat."

He explained that enhancements added to food after it leaves the farm are primarily what a shopper pays for; little of the food dollar returns to the farmer.

The answer, van Donkersgoed believes, is nothing short of restructuring the food chain: "We need to reconnect to the eater, so we produce what people pay for."

Elbert van Donkersgoed is the new Executive Director for the Greater Toronto Area Agricultural Action Plan. The GTA Agricultural Action Plan has been developed by a multi-stakeholder umbrella organization involving the four GTA Federations of Agriculture and Regional Municipalities (Halton, Peel, York and Durham), with the support of the City of Toronto, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Toronto Food Policy Council and the food sector. The CFFO wishes Elbert Godspeed in his new endeavours.

This is an edited version of an article that appeared in The Calvin Spark, a magazine for alumni and friends of Calvin College, Michigan, USA.

District Leadership Training Sessions



The CFFO hosted four district leadership training sessions earlier this year in Richmond, Peterborough, Orangeville and Woodstock.

This was a new venture. Traditionally, the meetings have taken place every other year with individual district boards. The goal was to inspire the CFFO district association leadership in an effort to achieve more through local actions and initiatives. The particular context was that our long-time field services person, Martin Oldengarm, will be retiring at the end of the year and future Federation services will be delivered in a very different fashion.

Each meeting featured a presentation by either Bob Bedggood or Peter VanderZaag (former Executive Board members) illustrating how district association leadership can use creative thinking to get more accomplished locally. This was followed by a discussion on regional coordinators and success stories. Finally, various media representatives (Tom Van Dusen of the Ottawa Sun, Suzanne Atkinson of the Ontario Farmer and David Imrie of CTV Southwest) were present to help district leadership in understanding how to get their story out. District leadership handbooks were also provided for representatives. Throughout the sessions, district leaders were urged to “work smarter, not harder.”

Did You Know?

CFFO perspectives can be heard weekly on the radiowaves of Southwestern

Ontario. Listen for The CFFO Commentary on CKNX in Wingham, CFCO in Chatham and occasionally on CHOK in Sarnia. You'll hear thought-provoking commentaries from CFFO members and staff on issues important to farmers. Log on to the CFFO website at www.christianfarmers.org for text copies of The CFFO Commentary.



UPCOMING MEETINGS

SHEEP COMMITTEE	JUNE 1, 2006
EXECUTIVE BOARD	JUNE 6, 2006
PORK COMMITTEE Woodstock	JUNE 9, 2006
STEWARDSHIP & Policy W. Guelph	JUNE 15, 2006
STEWARDSHIP & Policy E. NAPANEE	JUNE 16 2006 TENTATIVE
PROVINCIAL Council Guelph	JUNE 28, 2006
CFFO CONVENTION	Nov. 10, 2006

New Position Statements Adopted by CFFO

Delegates from the 22 district associations of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario met recently to discuss issues of importance to the province's farmers. The following position statements were debated and endorsed by CFFO delegates.

Terminator Technology

The CFFO opposes the further development and introduction of germination-inhibiting (terminator) technology. Delegates believe the primary motivation of seed companies is product control and not the public good. In addition, delegates believe that the possibility of cross-species infiltration is not well understood and that a serious risk to

food security exists if the terminator technology gets out of control.

Farms Less than 300 Nutrient Units

The CFFO wants farmers with operations under 300 Nutrient Units to not carry any costs for obtaining certification for completing a nutrient management strategy. Delegates also want the strategy certification process simplified to one-half day, with approval of strategies given to local peer-review committees. The CFFO believes that owner-operators of smaller farms earn a majority of their income off-farm and should not be subject to the same lengthy certification process.

Predator Management

The CFFO wants the Ministry of Natural Resources to be responsible for paying farmers compensation for livestock lost to wildlife. In addition, CFFO delegates want to see the MNR put together and finance an inventory of skilled people to control serious predator or crop-damaging wildlife. Finally, beneficial management practices for preventing wildlife damage should be supported by a 90 per cent cost share program with federal/provincial participation.

If you would like a copy of any of these position statements, log on to www.christianfarmers.org and proceed to the Policy and Issues link.



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