



## NFU farmers sound alarm on Climate Crisis for Farmers at United Nations Summit

In November 2021, the National Farmers Union (NFU) sent seven farmers and food producers representing a wide range of agricultural sectors to the United Nations Conference of Parties on Climate Change (COP26) located in Glasgow, Scotland. The farmers came from all across the county, and their expenses were paid for in an incredibly successful fundraising drive. The farmer delegation included the Youth President and Youth Vice-President of the NFU, a fitting symbol that the worsening climate crisis is calling into question the future of farming itself as increasingly severe and unpredictable weather will continue to introduce even more risk into our already precarious agricultural system.

The NFU delegation participated in events, marched in protests, spoke with the media and met with policy makers to ensure that the message got out there that farmers need support to help deal with the effects of the climate crisis but also that they can be part of the solution through the on-farm practices they use.

*“Farmers are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis. We came all this way in order to sound the alarm that farmers’ voices are needed in these conversations. We need to find solutions and support that will allow farmers to reduce emissions without further reducing net farm incomes,”* says NFU Youth President Stuart Oke, an Ontario farmer and COP26 attendee.

The conference brought together national delegations and world leaders in addition to a wide range of interested groups, organizations, associations, and private corporations. In spite of its emissions contributions and its potential to be a lead sector in addressing the climate crisis, agriculture was lamentably low on the COP26 agenda. Agriculture-

related initiatives, and pledges that did result were corporate-centered and excluded farmers’ voices. Climate Shot and Agriculture Innovation Mission for Climate (AIM4C) both promoted corporate-led, high-tech “silver bullet” solutions, co-opting the language of agroecology while perpetuating the climate crisis. Technology certainly plays a role in agricultural solutions to the climate crisis, but it must be farmer-led, open-source, emission-reduction technology. Reducing agricultural emissions while ensuring higher net incomes for farmers must be at the core of agricultural climate solutions.

*“This is an emergency. If the money intended to help support farmers deal with the climate crisis and adopt practises and technology that reduce on-farm emissions ends up in the hands of the same big companies as always then it will not only not help us deal with the climate crisis but it will further erode the net income of farmers,”* says Oke.

In response to NFU questions Canada’s Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Steven Guilbeault, admitted that agriculture

was not as prominent in COP26 as it might have been, and has promised to “do some homework on that front.”

COP26 resulted in numerous non-binding pledges to address the climate crisis. The NFU delegation stressed the importance of reducing actual emissions and not just relying on net-zero schemes based on unproven technology, market-based solutions, misunderstood carbon sequestration science, and the further commodification of land.

The time for rhetoric without action is over. Canada must be a proponent of solutions rooted in science over profit, reconciliation over commodification, decolonization over exploitation, and farmer led solutions over corporate profits. Having returned from COP26, Canada’s track record will be shaped by the actions of its government tomorrow and in the months to come.

*“We don’t just need to do something because it’s the right thing to do but because, if we don’t, I’m not sure how we’re going to predictably grow food and produce crops in the future,”* warns Stuart Oke.

### Local News/Events

**Local 316** - Our Annual General Party will be held on Sat., Jan. 15 at 6:45 pm on Zoom. Join us for dynamic speakers, 3 - \$100 door prizes from local businesses, musical performance by The Gertrudes and election of directors! Email: [local316@nfontario.ca](mailto:local316@nfontario.ca) if you’re interested in getting involved and for more info on the AGP.

**Local 320** - We’re hosting our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Wed., Jan. 19 at 7:30 pm on Zoom. From the comfort of your home, enjoy a presentation by Ruth Knight (PAG, CCA-ON) of Organic Consultant Inc., regional updates, elections, door prizes, and more! For more information, contact Linda at: [sonnenrainfarms@outlook.com](mailto:sonnenrainfarms@outlook.com)!

**Local 340** - We’re holding our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Thurs., Jan. 27 at 7:00 pm at the Elora Brewing Company, in Elora. Refreshments will be provided. For more details, please contact the Local 340 at: [nfu.local340@gmail.com](mailto:nfu.local340@gmail.com)!

**Local 362** - We’re hosting our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Thurs., Jan. 27 at 7:00 pm. Location TBD. Members should keep an eye out for an email with more informaton. Contact Kate at: [kate@heartbeetfarm.ca](mailto:kate@heartbeetfarm.ca) to get involved and to RSVP!