



Farming in the face of a pandemic

As a grassroots organization, the NFU is its members, and there is no organization without them. So, who are the NFU's members?

Our members range from young to old; those just starting out and those who were raised on the farm; farmers with lots of acreage and those with just a couple of acres; and farmers who raise all types of crops and livestock. We reached out to a couple members to find out why they joined the NFU and what their experiences have been like farming in the face of a pandemic.



**Arwa de Groot from
Mapelton's Organic Dairy**

My family joined the National Farmers Union in the early 1990s shortly after my parents, Martin de Groot and Ineke Booy, converted to organic agriculture. Ineke was a very active member during her time and felt that the NFU was working towards those things we hold dear. In our eyes, it was the perfect farm organization to represent our views on environmental concerns in agriculture and supporting family farms as a way to work towards food sovereignty.

Additionally, the organization's structure ensures everyone has an equal voice regardless of race, gender, or farming type. The NFU's solidarity with other like-minded

organizations both nationally and internationally is very important as we believe everyone has a responsibility and a role to play in improving the world. Martin has also been an active member fulfilling the role of treasurer for many years on the local board, and I have sat on the local board for over 10 years since returning to the family farm to run it with my dad.

Farming is fraught with unexpected challenges and COVID-19 has certainly proved to be one. Physical distancing restrictions mean we have not been able to welcome visitors to the farm. Normally we open our doors, barns, and fields to the public which invites droves of people eager to experience and learn about farm life and how their food is produced. In order to make up for this, I have developed a delivery website and online store where people can buy ice cream and meat online and have them delivered to their door.



**Danie McAren from
Wild Leek Farm**

This is our second season farming as an NFU member. We have only

been running commercially for three years, and we waited until we had passed the farm business income threshold before we registered.

We are a very small farm, all things considered. We operate as a market garden, growing one acre of mixed vegetables. We grow in a way that meets or exceeds the Canadian Organic Standards and follow the principles of agroecology as closely as possible. The NFU definitely was the right fit for us as the organization's mission falls in line with our own values. We also felt we would have far more respect and voice as a small farm within the NFU organization, and that community of like-minded farmers.

This year has been a special one for sure. Our earliest safety step was to invite our very first staff person to move in. Luckily, they were agreeable to that situation and came to stay after a two-week quarantine. We felt it would facilitate our ability to work closely together and share tools and not be concerned about spreading any germs. We wear masks during harvest and at any point that we are handling food or CSA bins, as well as during delivery. We have opted not to wear gloves but instead wash like surgeons before harvest. During CSA pick-up we sanitize our hands between each customer. We have set up our CSA pick-up to keep everyone physically distanced and have everyone book a 15-minute appointment window so there are never more than two members on site at a time. Only farm staff handle produce and we load into tote bins which customers place in a designated area without touching their bin.

Is there an NFU member you think we should highlight? Do you want to be featured? Reach out to us at office@nfuontario.ca or call 888-832-9638.

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