



National Farmers Union – Ontario NEWSLETTER

*Strong Communities.
Sound Policies.
Sustainable Farms.*

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Land access tools for new farmers

Access to land has always been the main obstacle for new and young farmers, and the problems have been getting worse. With rising land prices, the farm income crisis, and policies that continue to encourage consolidation, it is no wonder that generations of young people have left rural areas in pursuit of better opportunities in cities. In recent years, we have begun to see a reversal in this trend, with more and more new entrants returning to the countryside. The 2016 census saw the first uptick in young farmers since 1991.

A 2015 survey of over 1000 new farmers across Canada, conducted by the NFU Youth, found that 83 per cent of new farmer respondents did not grow up on a farm. This adds an additional layer of complexity to the land access question – new entrants are no longer primarily relying on family transfer of land. And for many aspiring farmers, the market price of agricultural land is out of reach, as are traditional financing models.

Meanwhile, the average age of farmers in Canada is now 58, and only 1 in 8 have a written succession

plan. It is only a lucky few that have children interested in taking over the family farm. Clearly, innovative solutions are needed to promote intergenerational land transfer outside of the traditional family structure. We need to find new ways to connect new farmers to retiring farmers and landowners, and we need to develop new financial models for land access and transfer.

In British Columbia, Young Agrarians (www.youngagrarians.org) produced a Land Access Guide that outlines various possible land access and financing models and guides new farmers through the process of searching for land and developing comprehensive agreements that work for land owners and land seekers alike. Accompanying this guide are annotated lease and license templates. YA also runs regular land-linking workshops to network land owners and seekers and is currently developing a land matching pilot project based on Quebec's successful L'ARTERRE land bank program.

The NFU-O is excited to announce that we have received funding from

the Law Foundation of Ontario to adapt these resources and programs to serve farmers in Ontario. We are working with lawyers to update the lease and license templates and Land Access Guide and will be conducting a survey of Ontario farmers to identify how we can provide further support and education around tenure rights and other legal issues regarding land transfer. Keep an eye on our e-news for the survey link.

We will be engaging in community outreach projects to ensure that these resources get into the hands of those who need them. The first of a series of workshops will be held on March 1 at the NFU-O convention in Belleville (see our website for more details).

This project is part of our ongoing work to protect farmland and promote land access and succession planning for farmers in Ontario. To support this work, please join the NFU-O.

Coming Events

Renfrew Local 330 – Next meeting is Monday, March 5, 7:30 p.m. at the Barr Line Community Centre. Everyone is welcome.

Stormont, Dundas, Glengarry, Ottawa, Prescott Russell Local 362 – Next meetings are March 6, 7:00 p.m. and April 3 at The Swan on the Rideau 7:00 p.m. 2730 River Rd, Manotick. Please note the change of location.

Perth/Oxford Local 341 – AGM, Wednesday, Mar. 21, 7:30 p.m. at the Downie Optimist Hall, St. Pauls, 3185 Perth Road 122. Speaker: Ayla Fenton, NFU Region 3 Board Member and former NFU Youth President will speak about her experiences at the La Via Campesina International Conference in July 2017 and about the NFU's work to support a new generation of farmers. Everyone welcome. For more information contact Local President, Andy Megens at 519-284 -3199.

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Keynote Presentation:
Sarah Harmer & Joan Kuyek

Join us for a discussion with Sarah Harmer & Joan Kuyek about the importance of community organizing.

Thursday, March 1
7:30pm-9:00pm
Core Arts & Culture Centre
223 Pinnacle St, Belleville, ON

This event is part of the Region 3 Convention & NFU-O AGM
For information and to buy tickets, visit: www.nfuontario.ca

Cultivating Change
Region 3 Convention & NFU-O AGM

March 1-3, 2018 | Belleville, ON

Come out and participate in workshops on grassroots organizing, debate resolutions, vote in elections, and much more!

March 1: Keynote Presentation - 7:30PM
March 2: AGM & Workshops - 9:00AM-6:00PM
March 3: Winery Tour - 10:30AM

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For more information and to register, visit: www.nfuontario.ca

A subscription to The Rural Voice is one of the benefits of being an NFU-O member