



National Farmers Union – Ontario NEWSLETTER

*Strong Communities.
Sound Policies.
Sustainable Farms.*

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Local Food and Farm Co-ops: Bringing Benefits to the NFU-O Membership

Small but mighty, Local Food and Farm Co-ops (LFFC) is a valued ally of the NFU-O and our relationship is only growing! Since 2009, LFFC has developed tangible resources to strengthen Ontario's local food systems and support small- and mid-scale agricultural producers.

LFFC provides its direct members with a plethora of resources from educational programming and training events to bookkeeping and communications services. The Fair Finance Fund that offers loans and mentorship services to local food and farm enterprises came out of collaboration with the LFFC, the NFU-O, and agricultural sector interests. The annual LFFC Assembly is a hit for eaters, co-ops, and progressive farmers across the country. At the "Resilience" on-line Assembly in March 2021, the NFU-O had a virtual table and joined a panel on the present and future of farm work.

The LFFC shares a commitment to succession planning. They are currently supporting NFU-O member farm, Zócalo Organics, as they seek a solution to their farm's transition.

"I know that I have LFFC's facilitation and support as we figure out what is next for our farm," says Bethany Klapwyk of Zócalo Organics. "They've been awesome."

LFFC is also tilling new ground in Northern Ontario where they are tackling the unique challenges of value-chain coordination, high-cost transportation needs, a lack of infrastructure, short growing seasons, and food access inequity in remote and rural communities.

Their Northern Food Distribution Network brings diverse, like-minded partners together, including NFU-O North members, to collaborate and overcome these challenges. In July, they helped launch the 807 Food Co-Op in Dryden, Ontario, offering

eaters meat and produce from local farmers in flexible food subscription boxes.

Working with the Beef Farmers of Ontario, the LFFC initiated the Northwest Beef Co-Op to develop a regional brand, enhance consumer confidence, and collectively pursue wholesale contracts. This co-operative value chain initiative aims to lead to more local processing and leverage additional revenue to sustain critical local abattoirs.

LFFC's Northern Ontario projects are funded by FedNor and the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation.

"We are guided by a collective vision to get more local food on Northern Ontario consumers' plates," says Jen Springett, LFFC's Northwest Regional Coordinator.

But wait, there is more:

From Farm to Co-Pharm: New NFU-O Drug Benefits!

This fall, NFU-O members will be the first in the province to have the opportunity to join Co-Pharm – a low-cost co-operative drug plan – to save on prescriptions, medications, and other healthcare products.

Many farmers are among the 30 per cent of Ontarians who do not have adequate health insurance coverage to pay for prescription medications.

The LFFC facilitated this new NFU-O member benefit via their connections with the Ontario Co-operative Association and Co-Pharm, a collaboration between the Nova Scotia Cooperative Council and Genrus Buying Group, Inc.

"We are thrilled to share this opportunity with NFU-O farmers. The recent federal election brought with it a reminder of the government's unfulfilled promises on universal pharmacare," says Shylah Wolfe, LFFC's Project Manager. "Once again, co-ops and unions are

stepping up to fill the needs of our communities!"

NFU-O members will have until November 5, 2021 to take advantage of an exclusive 3-month free trial offer. Co-Pharm members will benefit from a low \$5.49/RX dispensing fee, lower prices on all medications, and discounts on healthcare items. Best of all, everything will be delivered to your home for free.* Track your savings. If you save over \$20 during your three-month free trial, this plan is for you. After the trial period, members will pay a subscription cost of just \$79/year per individual.

"I'm excited that we are able to offer pharmaceutical savings to our membership," says Brendan Grant, co-operator of Sleepy G Farm, NFU-O North President and Vice-President of the NFU-O. "Not only will Co-Pharm help my family and other farmers' families, I also plan to pay for individual plans for our farm staff as an employee benefit."

* Orders of less than two prescriptions or under \$50 may be subject to a small delivery fee of \$2.99. Delivery will be next day where available.

Coming Events

Our Land-Linking and Farmland Conservation series is back!

Join us for three consecutive Thursday night workshops on October 28, November 4 and November 11 for discussions on farm financing and business planning, BIPOC land access, and to hear from successful land partnerships!

For more information and to register, visit the NFU-O website or email office@nfuontario.ca

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