- Human Resource legal requirements were demystified and were broken down into manageable steps
- Employers heard directly from farm workers on how to create welcoming and safe work environments, including ways to work together to stay healthy during extreme weather events
- Employers promoted the benefits of becoming a certified living wage employer through the Ontario Living Wage Network and discussed other non-monetary perks that employees value
- Wanting to expand the diversity of their staff, farmers discussed ways to adopt more inclusive and equitable employment practices
- And so much more.

Over a dozen employer experts from a variety of backgrounds and agricultural operations and with years of experience between them shared their knowledge and helped facilitate the discussions.

"My business is brand new. I didn't know the first thing about hiring," reported one anonymous participant. "These sessions gave me all the resources and tips I needed to ensure my first successful hire!"

"I'm often shy and tend to avoid conflict, these sessions gave tips on how to address conflicts constructively and collaboratively. I'm excited to apply these tools this growing season" said a seasoned farm manager

This year, by popular demand, we will be adding a bonus 5th session that will review grants and loan programs for both employers and for general farm operations. Find out from our experts how to prepare a successful grant application and keep apprised of the latest grant and loan offerings!

For more details contact David Thompson at david@nfuontario.ca.

This Employment Ontario project is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario









### Farm Business Registration season is just around the corner!

Scan the QR code to renew your FBR online. Select the NFU-O as your farm organization and continue to be part of the thousands of passionate, innovative farmers across Ontario working for a food and farm system that is better for farmers, eaters, and the land.

# Member Newsletter

Dear NFU-O Members.

You are the heart of our farm organization. Each year, members come together to tackle issues of importance to them. They bring forward resolutions to guide our policy priorities, and they form our farm leadership, both on regional council and as local executives. Together, we are working for a food and farm system that is better for farmers, eaters, and the land.

This year we offered another round of free online HR training modules for farm employers. These sessions were incredibly valuable and we are excited to be able to offer the series again in 2025, with renewed funding from the Ministry of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development.

Many strides were made with our Land Access work this year. Through the Land Access Coalition, in partnership with EFAO, we fostered collaboration among experts in social finance, farmland protection, land trusts, food sovereignty, and affordable housing, and identified short and longterm land access policy recommendations. Our Land Access Field Coordinators organized 12 workshops and webinars in the GTA, Grey County, Kingston and Ottawa, helping to strengthen connections, promote collaboration, and better support Ontario's landless farmers.

Our 2024 policy submissions advocated things like electrification development that is complementary to farmland protection, utilizing the federal Pickering lands for public land access opportunities, and ensuring municipal boundary change regulations in the PPS are complementary to farmland protection. We supported small-scale farmers by exploring NFU policy around selling

non-quota eggs at market. We also directed our focus on the Wilmot Township farmland expropriation threat. We joined forces with Fight for Farmland to stand against the proposed industrial development on 770 acres of prime farmland.

Our 2024 AGM & Convention. "Soil: A Matter of Biology" was held at the University of Guelph Arboretum, where delegates and members participated in panel discussions on soil health, nutrient cycling and soil performance, heard about funding pathways for soil health initiatives, discussed policy, and elected new leaders. This was our first in-person AGM since 2020!

Thank you for your participation and insights throughout the year. As we look ahead into 2025, I encourage you to get involved in your Local activities and continue to bring your concerns and insights to your elected leaders. Here's to another year of working towards the shared pursuit of a thriving agricultural community in Ontario.

Wishing you all a warm and joyful holiday season,

Max Hansgen



# 2024 Highlights & Looking Forward to 2025

## NFU-O Says 'No' to Land Expropriation

Over 80 farmers and eaters gathered at St. Jacobs Foods in Wilmot Township for a tractor rally organized by Local 340 members. The day was emotion-filled as attendees reflected on what would happen if the 770 acres of prime farmland surrounding them would be turned into an industrial complex. We heard compelling stories from Fight for Farmland leaders, the owners of

St. Jacobs Foods. Eva Jakubcova and Tim Wagler, and NFU President Jenn Pfenning, who farms nearby in the community. Overwhelmingly, attendees voted, NO to land expropriation, but will the region and province listen?



# Ontario Farmers for Agricultural Conservation: An NFU-O Report and Survey on Advancing **Best Nutrient Management Practices**





agricultural conservation, protecting water quality and addressing the rise of toxic Lake Erie algae blooms. Over three-quarters of the 246 farmers surveyed for this report acknowledge their role in mitigating water pollution caused by manure and synthetic fertilizers. Farmers expressed concerns about the excessive and inefficient use of fertilizers, which pollute watersheds and contribute to climate change, while feeling financially exploited by fertilizer companies. The policy recommendations aim to showcase farmer commitment to environmental stewardship, improve soil and water quality,

challenge nutrient mismanagement, and ensure that farmers can

maintain a profitable livelihood without harming the environment.

Help Us Understand Your Needs & automatically be entered to win some NFU-O merch!!!

Complete our member survey and tell us what issues you are most concerned about. Be sure to click 'Submit' once you're finished.



### Organizing Around Concerns That Impact Livelihoods

#### Non-quota Egg Sales

Struggling to sell your nonquota eggs at market? This year, over 40 farm members engaged in a meeting to explore opportunities for non-quota egg sales. Stay tuned and join us for the next meeting!

#### Small-scale Meat Production

Having trouble accessing an abattoir in your region? Many farmers need to travel hours to get to an abattoir, if they can get in at all. What other challenges are you facing as a small-scale or direct market meat producer? Join us for informative discussions this winter.

#### **Business Risk** Management

Do you currently or have you ever accessed the Business Risk Management (BRM) programs? How has your experience been? Have you had any challenges with those programs? We want to hear from you.

If you would like to attend meetings in 2025 to discuss any of the above contact Dave Thompson at david@nfuontario.ca or call 705-738-3993 x 102

#### Land Access & Transition

Our Land Access work has focused on alternative models of land access, policy recommendations, and supporting connection building. In 2025, we'll also be focusing on farmland transition. Are you thinking about retiring in the next few years? Interested in keeping your land in agricultural production, but do not have a transition plan?

To join in on Winter Succession Planning contact Jess Tong at jessica@nfuontario.ca

#### NEW Farmland Grab Website Feature - No Soils, No Land, No Food

Introducing the NFU-O's new farmland protection campaign and webpage. "Protect Ontario Farmland" is a campaign that highlights ongoing grassroots efforts to fight back against regional farmland grabs.

At the "Protect Ontario Farmland" webpage, you can:

- Actively track farmland grabs across the province via our interactive map
- Submit local farmland threats in your area so we can add it to the map using the "Know of a Farmland Threat Near You?" form
- Join the calls to action from grassroots organizations fighting farmland loss in their area

Find the webpage at nfuontario.ca & join the fight today!



Download a copy of the report using the QR code, or find it at nfuontario.ca under 'Reports.'

Farmers in Ontario are concerned about