



Editorial

All Hail Crown Prince Stephen!

Gib Drury
QFA President

Every so often, we the people get to choose who we want as our new king or queen. In Canada, we call them Prime Minister—not “Your Highness”—but the sweeping powers we invest in them make them more powerful than most real kings or queens. It is nearly impossible to dethrone a chosen king once he gets his crown. However, if a majority of us don’t agree on who is to be king then we get a Crown Prince who has to joust with other rival princes. It is all tied up in majority/minority parliaments, and can be quite confusing as the court rivalries and alliances constantly change. When we choose several “Princes” instead of a big king, they always fight amongst themselves to win the crown. Pandemonium then ensues in the Royal House, also known as Parliament.

We give these monarchs the authority to tax our incomes, our businesses, our properties, our goods and services and they even have the right to set the rates at which they want to tax us. As if that were not enough already, we grant them additional privileges to hit us with special taxes on our capital gains, our inheritance, our gifts, on hotel rooms, restaurant meals and (the one I like best) on our sins: alcohol and tobacco! Soon they may go for the big money maker and put a tax on marijuana and other recreational drugs. Then we can save on police enforcement, and the other taxes could be reduced. (Go for two per cent reduction on GST please Crown Prince Stephen!) Unbelievably, if our rulers cannot squeeze enough money out of us through taxes, we even allow them to spend more than they collect (deficit spending). Real kings and queens never had it so good!

Being newly elected royalty is a heady thing, what with all your subjects kowtowing and bowing before you. It can get addictive, all of this power, and all the adulation—but that is where entitlement comes in. You have to earn that crown every so often. It is not yours to keep. We keep our new royalty on a short leash and only grant them their entitlement for a limited time—five years max.

We now have a newly crowned Prince Stephen and three more Princes-In-Waiting just hankering to joust with him. I wish them all the best of luck as they have a daunting task ahead of them: while they are busy squabbling, we expect them to provide us, their subjects, with a comprehensive health-care system, an educational program, civil protection and personal security, a transportation infrastructure, and an energy distribution network—to name just a few of the big demands. Some rulers are pros at balancing these demands with the taxes extracted from the citizenry, others create huge deficits or surpluses.

The most dangerous scenario for a new king is to create—even inadvertently—a surplus. Then everyone is dissatisfied. All those who pay taxes howl that they are overtaxed and the rest wail that if there is money in the royal coffers how come their needs are not being met? Creating budget surpluses is a guaranteed way to get the crown ripped off your head and nobody is going to thank you for your fiscal prudence.

So what is the best approach for Prince Stephen if he wants to become King and fully earn his entitlement? Spend, spend, spend! Rebuild and feed the cities, support agriculture and the rural regions, provide a functioning health care system and an educational framework for all the citizenry. And don't follow the example of King Ralph of Alberta and throw money around willy-nilly.

Beware, Prince Stephen, of all the court jesters who will gravitate to you and will invariably try some hare-brained schemes in your name and will only end up tarnishing your crown. You don't want your reign to end with a Gomery inquisition. We now have a commoner on the throne. Good luck, Prince Stephen. Serve your people well.

Below the Advocate presents the first of three articles on UPA Développement international and issues facing farmers in the developing world. See March and April 2006 editions for parts two and three.

UPA International Development seeks to help rural families across the globe

Andrew McClelland
Advocate Staff Reporter

Anyone who has grown up on a farm, or pursued their dream of buying land and putting the plough to the field, knows that farming is not an easy life. Long hours, tough labour, and frequent financial insecurity make farming—the world’s most important profession—an occupation fit for a select few.

On top of that, many would argue that Canadian farmers also suffer at the hands of under funding and unfair competition. And as many of us know, being an Anglophone farmer in Quebec can simply add insult to injury when trying to get important information on farming regulations or figuring out your municipal tax bill.

But step back and take a look at the big picture and you’ll see that North American farmers aren’t so badly off. Far too often, we forget that rural workers and peasants in impoverished countries are struggling to have the basic right to produce food and sell it for a fair price. For some farmers in Africa, trying to practice agriculture in front of a backdrop of political unrest, interference from business corporations, and an increasing HIV/AIDS epidemic is part of day-to-day- life. Combine that with the fact that many countries in Africa, South America and elsewhere in the developing world are still suffering the lingering effects of having been colonies exploited by Dutch, Belgian, English, and French governments and you’ll see that the global market is not a level playing field.

That’s why the *Union des producteurs agricoles* (UPA) decided to establish a special federation that would create a framework for sharing knowledge between Quebec’s farmers and agricultural producers in struggling nations. Created in 1993, *UPA Développement international* (International Development) is a not-for-profit organization that seeks to defend the right of the peoples of the world to feed themselves while respecting the earth.

With the majority of its funding coming from the Canadian International Development Agency, UPA International Development (UPA DI) assists the plight of rural farmers and farm collective organizations through projects in developing countries. Heavily involved in Africa, UPA DI has coordinated projects to support everything from grain marketing in Burkina-Faso to forestry entrepreneurship in Senegal.

International Development looks for a variety of different criteria when examining the projects in which it participates. The organization ensures that all of its activities will support democratic farming organizations and promote marketing of agricultural products through various means,

such as collective marketing systems. Always interested in sharing expertise between countries, UPA DI puts education as a top priority on its list and affirms the role of women in all of its international development programs.

UPA International Development also puts particular emphasis on the family farm as a model for sustainable agriculture. In 1998 it began its highly successful Rural Family Contest to acknowledge the perseverance and ingenuity of families that UPA DI is helping to establish profitable farming operations. Each year the organization selects a family from overseas as their Rural Family of the Year in hopes that Quebec farming families will recognise the shared values they have with farmers in other countries.

All in all, UPA DI sees families as the key fabric of the world agricultural community. As the organization itself points out, families working together for development is at the heart of all farming life—be it in English Quebec, Canada, or across the globe.

For more information on UPA International Development, visit their website—in English, French, and Spanish—at www.upadi-agri.org

Going against the grain

Learning the ins-and-outs of the Quebec Highway Safety Code is a job best suited for farmers

Andrew McClelland
Advocate Staff Reporter

It was a dark and rainy morning when Matthias Pertschy learned that the Quebec Highway Safety Code can be a *very* tricky thing.

On November 13, 2003, Pertschy, a grain producer from Notre-Dame-de-Stanbridge, was hauling a load of corn along Highway 133 in the nearby village of Saint-Pierre-de-Veronne-a-Pike-River. With his load secured in two gravity boxes hitched to his Ford tractor, Pertschy headed north along the highway, accompanied by his brother Frank and son Christopher.

The Pertschys had only advanced about a quarter-mile in the pouring rain when they were signalled to pull over by a constable from the *Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec* (SAAQ). On the spot, the *Contrôle routier* officer issued Frank a traffic ticket of \$240 for transporting a load not sufficiently covered by a tarp.

“Since my brother Frank was driving a tractor that I owned, he was charged as operator,” says Matthias, reflecting back on the incident. “If I had happened to be at the wheel, the fine would have been worse; they could’ve charged me as owner/operator. If that had been the case, the fine could’ve been anywhere between \$300 and \$900.”

The section of the law under which Pertschy was charged was section 471 of Quebec's *Code de la sécurité routière*—otherwise known as the Highway Safety Code—which states that “no person may drive or allow to be driven a road vehicle carrying a load that is not solidly secured or adequately covered so as to prevent any part of the load from moving or detaching itself from the vehicle.”

For years, Pertschy had transported grain in open containers with his load filled well below the brim—and while no trouble had come from the local police, the SAAQ had pulled him over on more than one occasion. Baffled and curious about the law, Pertschy and his brother decided to contest their fine.

“Everyone had always said that farm vehicles were exempt from having to cover their loads like big tractor-trailers or dump trucks do,” says Pertschy, “But no one knew where to find proof that it was true.”

His first step was a phone call to his local *Union des producteurs agricoles* representative. But when the president of Pertschy's Saint-Hyacinthe federation consulted with UPA lawyers, they found themselves stumped by the fine print, exemptions, exceptions and amendments of the Highway Safety Code.

“After a while, they recommended that it was probably best if we just paid the ticket,” says Pertschy.

Legal assistance finally came by a lucky coincidence. Matthias' son, Christopher, a student at Macdonald College, was taking a course that included a lecture on how Quebec's Highway Safety Code applies to farm vehicles. When Serge Lussier, the course instructor, mentioned that no tarpaulin is required for transporting grain as long as it is piled 15 cm below the brim of the container, Christopher perked up his ears and begged to differ.

When Christopher mentioned that his father and uncle had recently been fined for not covering their load of corn, Lussier, assistant director of Macdonald's Farm Management and Technology Program, assured him that farm vehicles were exempt from the regulation. The Pertschys were now armed with the information they needed to fight the case at Granby municipal court.

Lussier had directed Christopher Pertschy to a document entitled the “Cargo Securement Standards Regulation,” a government publication interpreting the Highway Safety Code that clearly states that regular procedures for securing heavy loads do not apply for farm vehicles as long as three criteria are fulfilled. First, farm vehicles must be equipped with a cautionary orange-and-red triangle on the rear; second, they must be driven below 40km/h; and third, the cargo must be contained against the structure of the vehicle, and must be strong enough to prevent any horizontal movement.

“Being in court was a bit like being in school again,” jokes Matthias. “The judge took attendance to see who was present, and then we entered our ‘Not Guilty’ plea.”

According to Pertschy, the judge presiding then announced that court was adjourned for an hour, after which time they could change their guilty plea after speaking with the municipality's lawyer.

When the municipal representative told the Pertschys that they were in violation of section 471 of the Highway Safety Code, the brothers produced pages they had printed from the Ministry of Transport's website—pages that outlined the second paragraph of Division 1 of the Cargo Securement Standards Regulation, which exempts farm vehicles from parts of the regulation.

The moment was one of the sweetest an agricultural producer can experience. The Pertschys had proved a government employee and a series of lawyers dead wrong.

“After I gave the municipality's lawyer the section we were following, she looked in her law books for a few minutes, but couldn't find the exact paragraph,” recounts Matthias. “Finally she said, ‘Well, it's printed off the website, and it gives you permission, so you're in the clear.’”

When the judge returned, she was surprised to learn that the law had in fact cleared the Pertschys. The brothers were absolved of any wrongdoing and did not have to pay one cent of the original \$240 fine.

Today, Matthias Pertschy is satisfied with his victory. “It wasn't just because I wanted a fight with the SAAQ,” he explains, “Paying the ticket would have set a precedent, and from that point on other farmers might have had to pay tickets just like it.”

The Quebec Highway Safety Code is available online—in English—by visiting the Transports Quebec website at <http://www1.mtq.gouv.qc.ca/en>, and clicking on “Services” and then “Legislations and regulations.”

Those who are comfortable with French can view a version of the Highway Safety Code greatly summarized for agricultural producers by going to www.fpccq.qc.ca and clicking on “Centre de Documentation,” and then selecting “Guide de sécurité.”

The Cargo Securement Standards Regulation is available in English at www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca, and can easily be found by typing “Cargo Securement Standards Regulation” into www.google.ca

QFA receives funding from Canadian Heritage

Ivan Hale
QFA Executive Director

In January, the federal ministry of Canadian Heritage informed the QFA that it will provide the association with a \$65,000 contribution under its Official Languages Support Program, for

activities during this fiscal year. This matches the level of support provided in 2004-2005, but is substantially lower than the amounts received in prior years.

The money will be used to assist with priority areas set forth in QFA's action plan for 2005-2010. Specifically, it will be go towards partially covering costs in two activity areas:

- Adopt an effective organizational structure and solid financial base
- Expand links with rural and agricultural community—*Getting in touch*.

Twenty-four organizations in Quebec receive funding from this federal Program, including the 4-H. The groups are all members of the Quebec Community Groups Network (QCGN). The QCGN is a not-for-profit organization bringing together English-language community organizations across Quebec for the purposes of supporting and assisting their development, enhancing the vitality of the English-language minority communities, and promoting and supporting the use of the English language in Quebec.

Martin Murphy, QCGN chair, and Deb Hook, QCGN executive director, met with the QFA board of directors in January to discuss the future of the Official Languages Support Program, QCNA's strategic plan, and ways in which member organizations can share information and support each other.

The QFA has already begun its application to the Official Languages Support Program for financial support for the fiscal year beginning April 1. QCGN members, including the QFA are understandably nervous because during the federal election campaign the Conservative party indicated that it would shut down the federal department of Canadian Heritage. It is too soon to know whether they will carry through, or to know whether the program might be reinstated under a different ministry. However, all QCGN members would be hard pressed to carry on without financial support from this source.

Highlights of UPA General Council meeting

Gib Drury
QFA President

General Council is the board of directors of the UPA and consists of the 15 presidents of regional federations and the 25 presidents of the specialized federations, which includes the Quebec Farmers' Association. As the association's president, Gib Drury represents the QFA at the UPA's monthly General Council meetings. Below are his summaries of files reviewed by the General Council and the positions adopted by the UPA.

Marketing initiatives in the "Get More from the Marketplace" campaign

Twenty-one commodity groups have strategies in place. Progress report on initiatives in potatoes, apples, greenhouse produce, market gardening, organics, processing vegetables, maple syrup, honey, milk, table eggs, incubation eggs, field crops, goats, sheep and lambs, rabbits, beef (3), pork, wood, and domesticated wildlife (bison, elk, deer, wild boar).

Issue prioritization

Short-term priorities are set for 2006. They include:

1. Revision of Federal Agriculture program (Agricultural Policy Framework)
2. Grain producers' financial crisis
3. International trade talks and the preservation of supply management
4. Marketplace equity

Communications

New strategy adopted that will be more upbeat about the future of farming. A more positive message required.

Kilometrage rate

Raised \$0.02/km to \$0.38/km

Per diems of directors

Unchanged since 2003, and will remain the same.

Milk quota cap referendum

New proposal to cap the value of quota at \$26,000/kg. There will be a telephone vote of producers from March 20-24, 2006.

Organic agriculture

President of the organic producers federation, Gerard Bouchard, presented report on the status of organic agriculture in Quebec: number of certified producers doubled to 880; industry growing at 20 per cent per year for past five years; 80-85 per cent of products are imported.

Hong Kong Ministerial Conference on world trade

No major changes adopted. The Canadian Wheat Board may have to change its procedures but need not be abolished. Countries are seeking clearer rules on green, blue and amber boxes for subsidies.

Corn anti-dumping duty

Final decision on permanent duty will be made in April 2006. A special UPA committee will be put in place to develop a common ground strategy amongst specialized federations.

La Financière Agricole

Major accumulated deficit in grain crops fund (\$276 million). New plan to be developed for *la Financière* for 2006-2009. Producers will be consulted. *La Financière* should have a seat at the table for the upcoming negotiations on the Federal Agricultural Policy Framework.

Pork industry

In an unprecedented crisis: low prices, sickness in some herds from respiratory diseases, 15-25 per cent mortality in some barns, shortage of weener pigs because of exports to the US coupled with the moratorium on new facilities. A four per cent decrease in production in 2005, same forecast for 2006, resulting in plant closures. Giving Norway's model of ownership and production serious consideration

Municipal tax rebates

Agricultural producers got everything they needed in the new tax program, but had to sign an agreement prohibiting the tactic of snowmobile trail blocking in the future.

“No need to worry” about BSE case, say officials

Andrew McClelland

Advocate Staff Reporter

Canadian farmers woke up to a whole lot of change on the morning of January 24.

Not only did the morning's papers announce that Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party of Canada had won a minority government, bringing with it the upcoming change in the position of federal minister of agriculture, but Canadian officials announced that Canada's fourth case of mad cow disease had been detected.

The six-year-old Holstein/Hereford from northern Alberta was tested in a Winnipeg laboratory on January 18, where the presence of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) was confirmed.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) officials reassured the press that no part of the infected animal entered the human food or animal feed systems. In an official statement, the CFIA repeated its message that Canada's safe food supply “remains protected through the removal of specified risk material (SRM) from all cattle slaughtered for human food in Canada.” SRMs are those parts of a slaughtered cow, such as the spinal column and brain tissue, which contain the BSE agent when livestock is infected.

Dr. Brian Evans, spokesperson for the CFIA admitted that while this new case of mad cow disease is an unwelcome setback so soon after resuming regular trade with the U.S. and Japan, it was not entirely unexpected.

“We have always maintained that we could find a small number of additional cases through our active surveillance program,” said Evans, speaking of the CFIA's national surveillance system which targets and tests cattle who are at high risk of being infected with BSE. The CFIA has tested more than 87,000 ruminants since Canada's first case of BSE in 2003.

Indeed, most representatives are treating the new case as a victory for Canadian food inspection standards rather than a blow to the national beef industry. Stan Eby, president of the Canadian

Cattlemen's Association (CCA), congratulated farmers for taking part in the national surveillance program and said that the latest detection should be viewed as another step in creating a BSE-free beef industry.

"This latest diagnosis is proof that the system is working. The incidence of BSE in the Canadian cattle herd remains extremely low and continues to decline due to intervention measures such as the ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban," said Eby.

Authorities were alerted of the possibility of infection when the Alberta producer noticed the heifer was exhibiting symptoms typical of BSE-infected cows. After consulting a private veterinarian, early tests were conducted in the province on January 16.

"The science is with us on this one," said Eby, reassuring Canadian farmers that there is no need to worry about another trade interruption, "Definitely don't worry about this situation."

So far, the CCA President's message seems to be confirmed by American officials. Mike Johanns, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, said that he anticipated no significant change in the trade of live or slaughtered ruminants between Canada and the U.S.

"I am confident in the safety of beef and in the safeguards we and our approved beef trading partners have in place to protect our food supply," Johanns stated in an official news release. "We will continue to adhere to international guidelines in our relationships with all trading partners, and my hope continues to be that we achieve a system of science-based global beef trade."

However, some specialists are concerned over the fact that this latest infected cow contracted the disease after the ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban. That preventative measure, which strictly prohibits giving cattle any feed containing traces of ruminant livestock, was introduced in 1997. Despite worries, not one out of the 24 animals that still resided on the birth farm of the cow tested positive for BSE.

The CFIA also announced that testing on a birth cohort (any animal born 12 months before or after the cow in question) is still ongoing and no results have been determined. The trace-out of an additional 67 animals from the birth cohort has also recently been completed. CFIA officials say that one of these 67 animals had previously tested negative for BSE under the National BSE Surveillance Program.

While the majority of key figures in the U.S. beef industry are supportive of Canadian farmers' efforts, a dissenting opinion was once again heard from R-CALF, the American stock growers legal fund. R-CALF used the opportunity to once again press the U.S. Department of Agriculture to make country-of-origin labeling mandatory on all beef in American supermarkets.

R-CALF has lately been in news for declaring that Japan is unfairly excluding U.S. beef from its markets—while allowing imports of meat from Canadian cattle if the cow was under 21 months of age at the time of slaughtering.

Also, Mexico has recently announced that it will begin accepting bone-in cuts of Canadian beef from young cattle. Mexico is the second-largest import market for the Canadian beef industry.

Farmers aren't scared of Conservatives

The election of the Conservative Party in Ottawa did not cause alarm for Quebec and Canadian farmers. "Everyone was in favour of a change, particularly farmers. Relationships had been difficult with the Liberals since they reduced the support to agriculture in their 1995 budget," said *Union des producteurs agricoles* (UPA) President Laurent Pellerin. "It is as though, over the years, the Liberals had abandoned farmers and the rural sector. Yet, they had all the elements, including the Easter report, but they did not use them. A readjustment is necessary at a time when farmers' net income continues to decrease."

Pellerin brought up the promise made by the Conservatives to abolish the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program (CAIS), which has been decried since the beginning, as it is not tailored to the diversity of Quebec agriculture and to the grain sector. "In addition, the Conservatives' federalism, which is more flexible and more willing to listen to the various components of the country, constitutes good soil in which to seed and harvest," added Pellerin. He is also pleased to see that Mr. Harper is not scared to compare himself to the Americans in terms of assistance for agriculture. The UPA president expects a quick settlement to the disastrous situation faced by grain producers as well as to assistance to the Canadian industry so that all beef meat can be processed in Canada.

Regarding supply management, Pellerin pointed out that the Conservatives voted in favour of the motion unanimously adopted last November by the House of Commons. The UPA president said that he hopes the issue will not be forgotten during the transition of power between the two governments while negotiations are still going on at the World Trade Organization. "We want to meet the ministers of Agriculture and International Trade shortly after their nomination. In addition, Prime Minister Harper was invited to the Canadian Federation of Agriculture's Annual General Meeting at the end of February.

"The election of ten conservative candidates is not a foolproof guarantee that the needs of Quebec agriculture will be met. We will use the agricultural producer elected in Lotbinière-Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, Jacques Gourde, the other nine candidates in the government as well as all elected candidates, regardless of their party, to further the agricultural issues. "No doubt Mr. Charest still has a few contacts with the Conservative party," he said.

CFA is ready

"We were and are ready to work with the political party elected by the population," declared the president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA), Bob Friesen. He did not want to say if he was or was not disappointed with the arrival of the conservatives in Ottawa, after praising the NDP's agricultural program several days before the election. "We will continue to promote our Canadian agricultural policy project and collaborate with the new ministers of Agriculture and International Trade in order to find long and short-term solutions to the income crisis

affecting farmers. The transition of power must be done quickly because the stakes are such that they cannot be put on hold,” he said.

“Regarding international trade, we will continue to push the ministers of Agriculture and International Trade to ensure that they promote a win-win Canadian solution in agriculture, which is to maintain supply management and the right of farmers to choose their marketing structures, such as the Canadian Wheat Board, while improving access of Canadian agricultural producers to foreign markets.

The Conservatives made gains on both shores of Quebec City. The president of the Rive-Nord UPA, Jacinthe Gagnon, explained the Conservative breakthrough in the Quebec City region by Stephen Harper’s promise to name elected Quebecers in his cabinet. “All hopes are alive. The *Bloc québécois* will continue to protect our interests and a minority government will create alliances allowing Quebec to prosper. However, it is time to deliver the goods and we will have to watch Mr. Harper to ensure he keeps his promises even if Quebec has three ministers out of only ten elected officials,” she stated. The president of the Beauce UPA, Jean-Denis Morin, was not worried that Beauce residents elected Maxime Bernier, ex-president of the Montreal Economic Institute, who was openly opposed to supply management. “We always worked with elected officials. Our challenge will be to ensure that the new MP understands agriculture very well so that he can do his best to defend it. Mr. Bernier knows economy very well. We will ensure he knows the ins and outs of supply management. The expectations are high and the Conservatives do not have four years to deliver the goods,” he concluded.

Jean-Charles Gagné
LTCN 2006-01-26

Overestimated reimbursement for U.S. corn

Canadian Corn Producers (CCP) are questioning that processors can obtain a refund for customs duties on American corn, especially in the case of meat producers.

The reaction is the same in Quebec, where the *Fédération des producteurs de cultures commerciales* (FPCCQ) strongly doubts that there is a possibility of bypassing the countervailing and anti-dumping rights. The FPCCQ believes that access to the refund program is not as easy as opponents to the countervailing and anti-dumping rights are claiming. The FPCCQ also pointed out that the alternatives for importing corn, such as importing from Argentina, are not economically advantageous. The FPCCQ intends on succeeding in banning the refund of the rights for exported products in order to respect the spirit of the Special Import Measures Act.

The CCP’s legal advisors stated that the customs rights refund programs do not apply in some cases, most notably in cases where meat is made from animals fed with American corn and exported afterwards. “It is clear that feeding corn to cattle does not constitute a manufacturing process,” claimed the producers on the basis of legal advice.

Therefore, corn producers are questioning the declarations made by representatives of the Canadian Customs Services Agency who implied that the refund or postponement of the \$75 per tonne rights would be possible after a detailed examination of the production sector.

PCM members include the *Fédération des producteurs de cultures commerciales du Québec* as well as the Ontario and Manitoba Corn Producers Associations.

At press time, the Canadian Customs Services Agency had not yet clarified its position on the possible postponement or refund of the rights on American corn processed into meat.

Thierry Larivière
LTCN 2006-01-26

Not everyone is happy with RMAQ's egg exchange program

The maximum price set by the *Régie des marchés agricoles du Québec* (RMAQ) for the exchange of eggs between graders was received with mixed feelings in the industry, ranging from satisfaction to outright rejection. The decision will not end the war between *Groupe Ovale* and Burnbrae Farms Ltd to maximize their shares of the Quebec market.

The biggest buyer of surplus eggs in Quebec, Réal Veer Inc., is extremely dissatisfied with the maximum price set by the RMAQ. Veer, the only grader in Quebec who does not produce its own eggs, does not have a quota and is not owned by producers, said he was determined to contest the decision, fearing that the price will stay in place after February 28 if not formally opposed. Réal Veer had proposed a maximum margin of 14.25 cents for bulk eggs. Set at 17.5 cents by the RMAQ, the maximum price is, according to him, totally unacceptable for eggs packaged in individual dozens considering the current competition. "They want to crush us. The big grading stations want control," declared Veer, who has been working in the sector for 45 years. He hopes for a stronger intervention from the *Fédération des producteurs d'oeufs de consommation du Québec* (FPOCQ) and pointed out that in Ontario, sellers who refused the price offered by the buyer are stuck with their eggs.

Disappointment

Disappointment was also in the cards for *Groupe Ovale*, which thought it had adequately demonstrated, using serious operative cost studies, that the minimum exchange price should be 26 cents per dozen graded in bulk (15 dozen). "Our eggs are always sent to shelling," declared Pierre Barbeau. *Ovale* has not had serious talks with Provigo since its eggs were pulled out from all the stores of this grocery chain in mid-September.

"The price is higher than what we had hoped for as a buyer, but it is not as high as what sellers wanted. The price of eggs packaged in individual dozens represents a lot of money for our company," said Ted Hudson of Burnbrae Farms. Hudson explained that his current level of egg purchases from other graders to meet his own needs results from low consumption observed

every year in January and February. “The war with *Ovale* is far from over. We have recuperated some volume, but there are things left to settle,” he stated.

“The *régie* split the difference. We’ll live with the decision. At least, the RMAQ gave a ruling on a maximum price so that buyers will not be able to say that the price of eggs is too high,” declared Michel Gauvin, President of *Nutri-Oeuf*. To find out the real impact of the price decided by the RMAQ, it would have to be applied during the Easter period (in April) when egg consumption is higher.

Pleased

The president of the FPOCQ, Serge Lefebvre, said he was pleased with the RMAQ’s decision, which fully understood what was at stake. However, the decision came a little late, after the Christmas holiday period when a lot of eggs are sold. “Both buyers, Réal Veer Inc. and Burnbrae Farms, were able to obtain eggs thanks to the Federation’s exchange program based on the decision. However, there is still a large quantity of eggs that always end up in processing,” he complained. Lefebvre is concerned by the fact that the RMAQ’s decision on the price of eggs ends on February 28, 2006. He hopes it will be extended until the RMAQ renders a decision on the FPOCQ’s request for arbitration on a marketing agreement with graders.

Jean-Charles Gagné
LTCN 2006-01-26

Quebec still hasn’t chosen a date for meeting on private forests

The meeting that Minister of Natural Resources and Wildlife (*Ressources naturelles et de la Faune*) Pierre Corbeil had promised to have with stakeholders from private forests has yet to happen. While representatives of private forest owners are questioning the time required to set a date, the minister’s cabinet stated that the meeting will be held as expected at the end of February or in March.

“Things are not moving quickly,” said the president of the *Fédération des producteurs de bois du Québec* (FPBQ), Jean-Pierre Dansereau. He stated that private forest stakeholders are still exploring ways of maximising partners’ contributions. It should be pointed out that minister Corbeil asked owners and industrialists to contribute more to the *Programme de mise en valeur de la forêt privée* (Private Forest Development Program) which the Quebec government has injected \$30 million into per year.

“There is a will amongst wood producers to move toward commercial work,” declared Dansereau. “First of all, we are looking at improving productivity by doing more work with the money invested. We think it can be achieved by improving the effectiveness of the system and

not by worsening people's working conditions. The Minister wants to obtain a greater contribution from the sector. For the FPBQ, it is essential to obtain more money from producers. What are the ways of meeting the minister's expectations? We think that the Program is essential because it is not by cutting the budget that Quebec will compensate the 20 per cent reduction of the forestry capacity in public forests."

The president of the *Regroupement des sociétés d'aménagement forestiers du Québec* (RESAM), Jean-Guy Rioux, is surprised that Corbeil is taking so long to set a date for the meeting. However, he recognized that talks between the various stakeholders in private forests were not successful in finding common ground.

"We are not on the same wavelength. Our group is ready to add 50 cents more per cubic metre to the producers' current 20 per cent; the industrialists are willing to exceed the maximum of \$8 million by paying up to \$1.50 per cubic metre over three years," said Rioux.

Coulombe Commission

In addition, Minister Corbeil announced the creation of the Implementation Council, a group in charge of advising him regarding the implementation of the recommendations from the Coulombe Commission. The 16 members of the council were nominated by the minister for a two-year term.

To represent the interests of private forest owners, Pierre Corbeil chose the well-known actor Marcel Leboeuf, owner of a bush in Kinsbury in the Eastern Townships. There is also Pierrette Fecteau, a forestry producer from the Beauce region since 1997 as well as Denis Côté of the *Société sylvicole de la Haute-Gatineau*.

Rural areas are also represented by Bertrand Berger, president of the *Conférence nationale des élus de la Gaspésie-Îles-de-la-Madeleine*, Gérard Lemoyne, mayor of Lebel-sur-Quevillon, Elzéar Lepage, co-president of the *Commission forestière de la Mauricie*, Richard Savard from the *Conférence des élus du Bas-Saint-Laurent*, Ivo Di Piazza, mayor of Baie-Comeau and Louis Lefebvre, associate of the *Stratégie de développement de la filière du bois du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean*.

Pierre-Yvon Bégin
LTCN 2006-02-02

Eleven Gaspé residents asking for syrup quotas

Jean-Noël Landry had a semi-retirement project: a sugar bush with 25,000 taps in Restigouche Sud-Est, in the Chaleur Bay region. He took a course in maple syrup production, obtained his licence to operate on public land, but still does not have a maple syrup quota.

Landry's case is not unique. Last week in the town of Gaspé, the *Régie des marchés agricoles et alimentaires du Québec* (RMAQ) heard the requests of 11 other maple syrup producers from the

area. They want the RMAQ to review a decision made by the *Fédération des producteurs acéricoles du Québec* (FPAQ) that prevented them from obtaining quotas during the quota allocation period in 2003.

The Gaspé producers pointed out that in 2000, Quebec's *Ministère des Ressources naturelles et de la Faune* (MNRFF) had put aside 1,200 hectares of public land for maple syrup production as part of the Gaspé economic recovery plan. In 2003, when the FPAQ implemented its regulation on quotas, these sugar bushes were still not ready for operation, an essential condition to obtain a quota.

Landry said he has not been dragging his feet. "When I applied for my licence, my hair was black," he said jokingly while showing his grey hair. "I encountered all sorts of problems," he added. His licence application, submitted in 1998, only came up in 2002 after a land registry review. He could not begin production in 2003 and 2004 because he had too much work to do in the bush before he could collect the sap.

Question of equity

The vice-president of the FPAQ, Serge Beaulieu, said it is a question of equity between regions. "Quebec producers restricted themselves to 75 per cent of their production capacity and when there will be expansion, it will be in all regions of Quebec," he declared. Quebec maple syrup producers are still dealing with a surplus stock of 60 million pounds of syrup. "There is pressure from the Outaouais and Témiscamingue regions, which have an enormous development potential. Things are not going too well in those regions, saw mills are closing," said Marc-André Côté, assistant-secretary at the FPAQ.

The Gaspé-Les Îles regional UPA supports the request made by the Gaspé maple syrup producers. It promised to develop new markets for Gaspé syrup, notably in the United States and Germany.

The RMAQ members have given themselves approximately two months to render separate decisions for each of the producers' requests.

Geneviève Gélinas
LTCN 2006-01-26

Beekeepers feel stung by imported honey

At 80 cents per pound, honey imported from Argentina and particularly China is making life hard for Canadian beekeepers. For Quebec honey producers, who estimate their production costs at nearly \$1.70 per pound, the situation has simply become unbearable.

“For the last two years, it has been downright dumping,” said Jean-François Doyon, president of the *Fédération des apiculteurs du Québec* (FAQ), who was attending the 65th annual convention of the Canadian Honey Council.

Ironically, Canada exports more honey than it imports. Last year, Canada exported 11,000 metric tonnes of honey representing \$27 million, compared to \$45 million for 12,000 metric tonnes for the previous year. During the same period, Canada imported 8,900 metric tonnes in 2004 and 7,400 metric tonnes for the first 11 months of 2005.

“We produce 20 per cent of what we need. Canadian honey is good quality and we are asking the Customs Agency to be vigilant. We want them to be stricter with the standards,” declared Jean-François Doyon.

Doyon believes that beekeepers have no other choice than to organize. From \$2 per pound, the price has dropped to 80 cents, well below production costs. If beekeepers have been able to survive so far, it is because of other activities such as pollination or the sale of wax. Even if FAQ represents 85 per cent of the hives in Quebec, only 150 of the 400 beekeepers are members.

“We must have only one voice in Quebec and in Canada. We want everybody to contribute financially and we also want access to crop insurance,” added Doyon.

The president of the Canadian Honey Council, Alain Moyen, denounced the labelling practices. The labelling of “Canada No. 1” on the honey jar labels does not guarantee that the honey was produced in Canada. It is simply a certification that the honey meets the Canadian food safety standards.

“The price of imported honey is beginning to sting us. Labelling has become a serious problem and Canadians are being tricked. The origin of the honey is not clearly indicated. Canada is a honey exporter and there is no reason why it should be a victim of dumping,” said Moyen.

Part of the 200 delegates at the convention, Quebec beekeepers denounced the provincial obligation to have a test on the use of pesticides in which they have to obtain 75 per cent to pass. Another frustration is that pertinent training could be limited, according to them, to a few hours.

Pierre-Yvon Bégin
LTCN 2006-02-02

Pork producers' president: "We are going through an unprecedented crisis"

The president of the *Fédération des producteurs de porcs du Québec* (FPPQ), Claude Corbeil, sounded a cry of alarm at a time when pork prices are at their lowest, disease is hitting animals and the corn market is going through tough times because of the countervailing and anti-dumping rights in effect since December 15.

"Cash flow is tight on our farms", said Corbeil, who pointed out that the price of pork has remained below \$145 per 100 kilos since September and has hit depths as low as \$120. There is not likely to be any stabilization insurance (FISI) intervention for 2003 and 2004. The FPPQ president stated that producers are just getting over the slump from previous years and they are not economically ready for another period of hardship.

This is even truer for producers faced with disease, notably the piglet wasting disease (PWD) associated with type-2 circovirus. The FPPQ estimated that approximately half of hog farms are dealing with PWD, the Porcine Reproductive and Respiratory Syndrome (PRRS), or both. The average mortality in farms went from 4 per cent in 2004 to 7 per cent in 2005. This figure is an average and those dealing with disease are in a far worse situation with mortality rates of 10 per cent and higher. In total, the number of pigs slaughtered decreased by 300,000 in 2005, which represents 4 per cent less than in the previous year.

The processing sector, particularly Olymel, must deal with this decrease. Corbeil said he is personally affected by the closing of the Saint-Simon plant, but he understands this business decision. "Luckily, no abattoirs have been affected," declared Corbeil.

"The disease is now in Ontario and is starting to show up in Western Canada and the United States," stated Corbeil. A lot of hope has been placed on a new vaccine made by Merial that could be administered to sows and gilts next spring. However, producers will have to wait several months before they have a vaccine for pigs and animal scientists do not know to what extent it will be effective.

The FPPQ hopes to convince the *Financière agricole du Québec* to find solutions to this particularly difficult situation. An amount of \$27 million could still be paid from the current program, but the FPPQ hopes it can convince the *Financière* to take into account the changes in the production costs and the increase in the mortality rate. Farming operations severely affected should be able to trigger the intervention of the Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization Program (CAISP), but the amount of compensation from the CAISP would not be enough to enable all farmers to pull through. "We need a plan B," stated Corbeil, who said he considered phoning 9-1-1 in the hope of obtaining an answer. "It is a human tragedy," said the president when talking about farmers who lost half their animals and others who emptied their barns twice in the same year.

Cohabitation problems do not help pork production. "It is very hard in some cases," said Corbeil, who fears that the industry will be destabilized by the loss of producers and the increasing exportation of Quebec piglets to the United States. Piglets are already being shipped from

Ontario, but that province is having an increasing number of problems with circovirus. All in all, it is hard to start a farrowing barn or a new hog farm in the current context.

Thierry Larivière
LTCN 2006-02-02

Farm Safety Week will target silos

The theme for Farm Safety Week (*Semaine de prévention en agriculture*), which will take place from March 8 to 15, will target silo accidents.

According to Denis Bilodeau, 2nd UPA vice-president and in charge of health and safety, there is at least one fatal accident per year associated with these storage buildings. “It should be pointed out that silos are buildings presenting a great variety of risks. First of all, they are enclosed spaces with all the risks associated with the production of dangerous gas such as nitrogen dioxide and carbon dioxide. They are also places where we have seen many deaths caused by falls due to the height of most structures. Many accidents are caused by the mobile components of silo unloaders. Finally, many farmers die of suffocation because they were buried in the grain,” he declared during the 2006 *Colloque des partenaires de la santé et de la sécurité en agriculture* held on January 19, in Trois-Rivières.

This event gathered the leaders of the UPA regional committees on farm safety as well as CSST and health network representatives. There were not many representatives from the health network because of resource allocation problems. The symposium is used to prepare lessons that participants will teach and to coordinate their activities during Farm Safety Week.

Denis Bilodeau does not hide the fact that the biggest challenge remaining is to encourage farmers to participate during Farm Safety Week. “Participation is often a big disappointment,” he said. According to him, there are still too many farmers that are isolated on their farm and that are not aware of the dangers to which they are exposed. “We work in a dangerous sector, but too many farmers think that accidents only happen to others. Sometimes, they know that they take chances, but continue to do so because they want to save time,” he explained.

Bilodeau would like farmers to take at least one day off to learn to develop a preventive approach to their work. “The coming Farm Safety Week is an excellent opportunity. Most of the time, there are not that many things to change on a farm, you mostly have to learn not to be careless,” he concluded.

Marc-Alain Soucy
LTCN 2006-01-26

Warning: Silo use can be hazardous to your health

Benoît Messier, a young dairy producer from Lefebvre, remembers that he was in the middle of making his lunch when a *Silos bleus du Québec* employee asked him to come to the aid of his co-worker—who had just lost consciousness at the bottom of the airtight silo he was repairing. Without hesitation, Benoît rushed to his help without knowing he would be within a hair's breadth of dying.

Once at the top of the silo, he saw the worker lying down on the grain corn having difficulty breathing. Showing great courage, Benoît realized he could not leave this man to die, and that something had to be done.

That was the testimony that Benoît Messier presented at the *Colloque des partenaires de la santé et sécurité en agriculture* on January 19, in Trois-Rivières.

Carelessness

The repairman had gone down to retrieve the plastic fitting that attaches to the end of a portable fan used to repair the silo. He had made knots in a rope and climbed down to retrieve the part despite his co-worker's objections. Wanting to go back up with the plastic piece, he asked his friend to pull him up. While ascending, he let go of the rope, falling on the corn below. Realizing that there was dangerous gas at the bottom of the silo, the second worker phoned 9-1-1 and went to get Benoît at the house.

Once on the scene, Benoît had planned to climb down the silo, tie the worker with the rope, go back up and then pull the worker out of the silo. Unfortunately, things did not go as planned. Once in the silo, he realized that the rope was too short to tie the victim. He then climbed back up and managed to tell the other worker to call 9-1-1. A few seconds later, he lost consciousness and fell on the corn. At that level in the silo, nitrogen dioxide (CO²) can reach high levels and push all oxygen necessary to breathe out of the building.

Faced with this situation, the second worker quickly lowered a four-inch pipe to the two men to give them some air. It was this that kept Benoît alive until firemen arrived on the scene. Unfortunately, it was too late to save the repairman's life.

The coroner who submitted his report after the accident came to the conclusion that *Silos bleus du Québec*'s health and safety management was inadequate regarding the maintenance of airtight silos. He blamed the company for not having procedures for entering enclosed spaces and for not adequately training new workers.

Marc-Alain Soucy
LTCN 2006-01-26

We go further together

Laurent Pellerin
UPA President

Asked to voice their opinion on the inventory coordination collective project, apple producers unequivocally reaffirmed their will to take matters into their own hands and their federation's mandate to go ahead with the collective marketing project.

In doing so, they also indicated clearly where their interests lie: equity among themselves, transparency and effectiveness.

It has to be said that the apple sector has certainly done its homework. Let's not forget that it is one of the most experienced joint plans that, in the past, has shown the ability to adapt through innovation. In fact, the current project is rooted in a longstanding approach aimed at developing the Quebec apple production sector, a well thought-out approach. Producers were consulted throughout last year; this choice is their answer to the challenges of an ultra-competitive market in constant evolution.

Even if yields per hectare were to increase, production costs to decrease, choice of products to diversify, quality to improve, etc., it will not be enough to pay for their production costs completely. The apple production sector needs more organized marketing. Once in place, the new measures will help control the surplus that causes prices to drop and the quality of products to deteriorate. The result will be a constant supply, which will have a direct and positive effect on producers' income and available stock. Everybody will win.

With this step being taken, producers will be able to take on other challenges. Competition is fierce in this sector of production, especially now that there is production from around the world with products coming from as far as China. Imported apples are fresh and of high quality and they arrive in great volumes, in a variety of choices and at a competitive price. Keeping its share of the market and even improving it requires a better positioning of the product, which in turn requires innovative solutions. This is the challenge that our local apple producers will take on. And they will succeed because they can count on good collective tools.

Instead of breaking away, producers have chosen to stay in the pack, convinced that while one may go faster alone, we can go further together. The *Régie des marchés agricoles du Québec*, which should render a decision on the proposed regulation soon, must take note of this message. By reaffirming a solidarity that they will still need, they are one step closer to the finish line: the implementation of inventory coordination by the next crop. It is their way of conquering their market once again while remaining open to partnerships and collaboration, skills that are essential to ensure the profitability of all stakeholders in the apple production sector.

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