

Quebec Farmers' Advocate

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What's in a catchphrase?

Ivan Hale
QFA Executive Director

Have you ever noticed how a catchy expression may stay in your mind not just a few minutes, but even days or weeks? Do you remember Tried, Trusted and True?

Why do I ask? Because I am very worried that Canadian farms are not sustainable—we're not able to attract young people to take over when we retire. Why is this, considering most of us would never trade farming for anything else? Part of the explanation may lie in our own attitudes, which are reflected in our behaviour and the way we talk about farming. Sadly, we have fallen into a rut where we spend a lot of our time complaining.

An ancient proverb familiar to many says, "God helps those who help themselves." So let's get started. In his essay on William Dean Howells, Mark Twain said, "A powerful agent is the right word. Whenever we come upon one of those intensely right words in a book or a newspaper the resulting effect is physical as well as spiritual, and electrically prompt."

Marketing firms charge handsomely to develop the slogans that find their way into advertising campaigns. What would happen if we tried to do so ourselves?

To help you get started here are a few examples of enduring slogans from the automotive industry that have stuck in my memory:

"Let's Go," by Chevrolet.

"Like a rock," by Chevrolet trucks.

"The Heartbeat of America," by Chevrolet (*ca. 1980s*).

"Quality is job one," by Ford.

"A Better Idea," by Ford, 1976-1978; followed by "Better Ideas. Driven by You," (*ca.1990s*)

Then there's the newspaper industry. In 1896, the New York Times came up with the most famous journalistic credo of all time when it declared its pages held "All the news that's fit to print." The Washington Post coined the phrase, "If you don't get it, you don't get it," in the

1990s. And I am sure you remember way back in 1964 when the Yellow Pages introduced its catchy jingle, “Let your fingers do the walking.”

Some Canadian agricultural producers have already jumped on the bandwagon. The OFA had a great slogan when they produced plastic license plate frames with the words, “Eat today? Thank a farmer.” Another recent example used for protests on Parliament Hill was “Farmers feed cities,” the chosen mantra of the Ontario Grains & Oilseeds coalition. Just think of the catchy advertising campaigns for butter, cheese and milk? They should make dairy farmers proud.

While driving into the city not too long ago, I was startled to read the message on the back of the feed delivery truck in front of me. Painted were the words, “No farmers, no food, no future.”

This led me to think about messages on the trucks that ply our highways. Those that came to mind were Tim Horton’s and Canadian Tire. Then I remembered how many cars and trucks are now displaying decals of a ribbon showing support for our troops or the search for a cure for breast cancer.

These moving messages are like billboards or signs at city bus stops. They get our attention and we begin to think about the message they are projecting. Often it’s a lifestyle. Usually the messages are no more than 5-6 words.

QFA is celebrating its 50th anniversary. It’s time for us to create slogans that describe our passion for agriculture, that convey the essence of our vocation.

Send us your ideas. (They must be original.) We will read every one and will reprint the best ones in future issues of the Advocate. And we will look at incorporating them in public awareness campaigns. Persons submitting the winning entries will receive a free 50th anniversary cap.

Remember the words of Charles Darwin, “It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” If we don’t think and talk positively about our chosen profession how can we expect others to do so? Change begins with each of us and we should start by consciously using different language in our vocabulary. Life is too short to do otherwise. Let’s promote our chosen field, not just once a year, but every day. Other occupations and businesses do so unashamedly. If we don’t, who will? Let’s sell the “sizzle in our steak.” I challenge you to think of slogans to promote agriculture!

Quebec producer’s BSE class-action suit will be heard

Andrew McClelland
Advocate Staff Reporter

The Quebec Superior Court has given the go-ahead to a class-action lawsuit that seeks to repair damages suffered by the province's beef production sector in the wake of the 2003 BSE crisis. The multibillion-dollar case charges the Canadian government of mishandling the facts and putting public safety in danger in managing the mad-cow outbreak.

Quebec Superior Court Justice Richard Wagner announced on June 17 that the beef producers behind the accusation will be able to have their day in court. The ruling came as good news for the beef production industries in Ontario, Saskatchewan and Alberta, who have co-operatively filed similar lawsuits in their own provinces. It is hoped that the Quebec case will set a precedent for its counterpart class-action suits.

“We are going to be entering into a situation where the rights to recover of the Alberta cattle producers will effectively be determined by the courts of Quebec,” said Cameron Pallett, an Ontario lawyer working as co-counsel in the Quebec case.

An official statement issued from lawyers handling the lawsuits claims that both the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada were responsible for “gross negligence... that allowed 80 British cattle that were supposed to be in a ‘monitoring program,’ to enter the human and animal food chain in Canada.” That negligence, say defenders of the case, is directly linked to the BSE outbreak that quickly spiralled into devastating losses of income for farmers across the country.

“It is a view held by many experts that the BSE crisis would never have happened if the federal government had not been asleep at the wheel,” said Gilles Gareau, the chief lawyer overseeing the lawsuit that says it is fighting for some 20,000 beef farmers, including milk producers.

The Quebec case puts particular importance on income fall-out caused by the import ban put on Canadian beef after the first case of BSE was discovered in Alberta in 2003. That ban, which saw the United States, China, Japan, Taiwan, Brazil and other countries prohibit the import of Canadian beef, cost Quebec beef producers over \$2 billion in revenues, according to those supporting the provincial lawsuit. Nationally, losses are being sought for up to \$9 billion.

The beef producer at the root of the Quebec class-action suit is Donald Bernèche of St-Gabriel-de-Brandon, about 80 kilometres southwest of Trois-Rivières. In court papers filed in his name, Bernèche's lawyer states that Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada was fully aware of the risk posed to Canadian cattle from Britain's BSE scare of the late 1980s. His official petition goes on to state that the federal government did nothing to prevent this risk when modifying regulations concerning animal feed in 1990, citing instead that Canada “did nothing, and instead opted to wait until August 1997 to intervene.”

Court papers also point the finger at Australian stockfeed manufacturer Ridley Inc., who are accused “of not warning Canadian authorities of the possible BSE contamination” in any cattle ingesting their feed. It is alleged that Ridley continued to sell feed that contained brain or spinal tissue in Canada until August 1997, even though in Australia, the parent company conformed to stricter feed production practices as of May 1996.

A date is yet to be determined for Bernèche's class-action suit, and all charges against the Canadian government will still have to be proven in court. However, Gareau is confident that the proceedings will give those supporting the suit an opportunity to voice their concerns over the handling of the BSE crisis.

"For the first time, Quebec beef producers will be heard," Gareau insists.

Sherbrooke Market brings back the old in a new way

Claudia Villemaire
Advocate Eastern Townships Reporter

Public markets are springing up like mushrooms across the province. The latest to open for business is the Sherbrooke Market, located in the old CPR station. Here, renovated space and ample parking are providing the perfect venue for a modern version of this tried-and-trusted method of marketing local produce and products.

The idea of returning to the local market for a few days' supply of fresh produce seems to be catching on again. Touring the new Sherbrooke market can bring back childhood memories for some, but how things have changed. The arched windows and wood paneling inside are intact. But new flooring, refrigeration units, the use of antiques for shelving, modern butchers' cases and shrink-wrap Cryovac packaging all conspire to make shopping at this newest public market a special pleasure.

Markets across the province must meet strict health and environmental regulations. Produce is now offered to consumers who are better informed and appreciative of chemical and hormone-free produce, and seem willing to pay the few cents extra for such items.

But some things never change, and certain memories never fade. Any Townshippier who used to shop here many years ago can still sense the sights, sounds and smells of the old Sherbrooke Public Market.

In those early days, the whole point of the public market was bringing fresh, locally produced goods directly to consumers who turned out en masse for the Friday market day in Sherbrooke. But progress comes in many guises. By the 1950s, with processed food, super stores, and the advent of having more women in the work force looking for ways to minimize cooking times, markets lost favour. Soon public markets began to disappear due to questionable sanitary practices, new slaughtering rules and regulations and inspection of meats and poultry. Consumer demand changed, super markets offered lower prices and more convenience to shoppers, and the days of public markets came to an ignominious end.

Claude Bedard, one of the founders of the Melbourne Farmers' Market, barely contains his enthusiasm for public markets in general and this one in particular. "When I retired and moved to

this area, the idea of a public market seemed a very difficult challenge. Five years ago, this trend was just beginning and now, markets are either starting up in some towns or, as in Sherbrooke, re-opening to feature local products, produced without chemicals or hormones and presented in a clean, modern locale,” Bedard emphasized.

Opening for its fourth season last week, this market—where, in its first year, about a dozen vendors showed up—set up shop with over 40 vendors. Other exciting features include a luncheon special, strolling musicians and specialized productions such as goat cheese, bison meats and locally produced wine. Of course, a full scale selection of vegetables and flowers, all of it produced in the immediate region, is also available at the Melbourne market

Bedard, now a director on the *Association des marchés publics du Québec* and a member on the steering committee of Farmers’ Markets of Canada (FMOC), is a staunch supporter of local producers for all his food requirements. “And that's the reason markets are gaining in popularity,” he explained. “We now have over 60 markets, large and small, in the province and every province is now represented on the board of the FMOC.”

Bedard pointed out the importance of continuing to inform consumers that much of what they need can be found either at a local market or a nearby farm gate.

“We want to encourage the rapport between producer and consumer,” he says. “In view of the government's Green Plan, the local market is an ideal place to begin cutting down on pollution; vendors offering produce grown without chemicals of any kind, and a start towards healthier lifestyles.”

The *Marché de la Gare de Sherbrooke* is a shining example of collaboration between producers, MAPAQ and the Ministry of Environment, especially on such enterprises as the *Boutique du Terroir Gourmet Québec*. These organizations and individual producers are responding to the action plan and development strategy being implemented by the agri-food sector in the Eastern Townships. The marketplace has been developed and equipped by the *Cité des Rivières* organization, a branch of Sherbrooke administration and tourism development, sitting squarely at the head of the scenic walkways and parks that stretch along the Magog River from the Paton Mill bridge to Lac des Nations.

“We were totally surprised by the number of people who came to browse and shop during our opening days last Friday and Saturday,” said Patrick Cloutier, a fourth-generation beef producer now trying to keep up to demand at his meat counter at the Sherbrooke Market.

“We were almost sold out by Friday night,” Cloutier said. The Cloutier family is a well-known supplier of quality, chemical-free beef in the Sherbrooke area. Formerly operating a shop on Belvidere Street, they decided to make the move to the CPR terrace.

“We have over 60 markets now operating in the province,” Bedard adds. “That means the local and regional economy has been treated to a new source of income. Local producers selling either at the market or the farm gate are happy with less transport to pay, no chemicals to worry about,

and finally, a place to sell their produce. Everyone is a winner at a well planned local public market.”

The Sherbrooke market is open every day with extended hours on Thursdays and Fridays.

Pinning the tail on the supply management donkey

Barry Wilson
Special to the Advocate

It was more than a bit surreal at the end of June to see Canada’s supply management leaders cross the continent to plead with agriculture ministers at the 2007 Federal/Provincial/Territorial Ministers and Deputy Ministers of Agriculture Meetings in Whistler. Industry leaders begged government leaders—and in particular federal minister Chuck Strahl—to send trade negotiators back into the fray at world trade talks where cuts to supply management protections are being negotiated.

Since (in the government’s version of things) Canada stands alone among 150 countries in refusing to accept the slightest decrease in protections for import sensitive sectors like dairy and poultry, the government has instructed negotiators not to become involved in the negotiating give-and-take on how to design the cuts.

It said its hands were tied by a 2005 unanimous House of Commons vote to refuse to accept any weakening of supply management protections. It said its options were limited by supply management’s unbending support for that House resolution.

But after more than a year of accepting that Conservative instruction as a sign the government would not bargain away supply management protections, industry leaders have now had a change of heart.

It appears to have dawned on them that if Canada is not in the negotiations trying to minimize the damage, countries that do not agree with Canada will be writing rules that will undermine supply management.

Strahl has publicly chastised supply management leaders for insisting he not engage in bargaining if cuts are on the table. Now, they are chastising him for keeping negotiator Steve Verheul out of the horse-trading, although they still insist he find a way to avoid changes.

“Egads!” said the farm leaders suddenly in June, “Canada cannot let enemies of supply management write the rules.”

Of course, these farm leaders were not asking negotiators to acquiesce.

They were asking them to re-engage in sensitive product negotiations at World Trade Organization talks to convince all 149 other WTO countries their rule changes for sensitive products are not necessary to increase real trade.

Here are their words from a June 19, Supply Management 5 statement:

“Canadian dairy, poultry and egg farm leaders will travel to Whistler, British Columbia during the upcoming federal-provincial-territorial meetings from June 26 to June 29, 2007, to rally further support for supply management from both levels of government. Though it has long stated its support for Canada’s supply management system, the federal government has effectively removed itself from the current round of agricultural trade negotiations at the WTO.”

The implication is clear. If only Canada rejoined the fray and articulated its objections, the world would understand. To do otherwise is to sell out supply management.

But these same leaders know well that Canada has been making these arguments for years and allies simply haven’t appeared. Sensitive product cuts either work to others’ benefit or do not hurt them. Canada stands virtually alone in its self-interest on this topic.

The Whistler meetings exposed a high stakes game of pin the tail on the donkey. Farm leaders won another political commitment of support, even though B.C. Minister of Agriculture Pat Bell said his government assumes WTO talks are off the rails for at least eight years.

But a WTO deal, unlikely as it is in the near term, eventually will erode supply management’s ability to function. The industry wants it made clear it has not been blocking Canada’s ability to defend the system by supporting a boycott of talks.

Strahl and the Conservatives want it to be clear they would like to defend the industry but need a more flexible mandate from the House of Commons.

Of course, whichever government is in power when a WTO deal is signed will have to be accountable for the weakening of supply management.

If it is the Conservatives, there will be some poetic justice. For pre-election political gain, they all supported the Commons motion, including Strahl.

Barry Wilson grew up on a West Quebec farm and has spent more than a quarter century covering agricultural, rural and trade issues on Parliament Hill as National Correspondent for The Western Producer newspaper.

DEVOTION TO DAIRY

Making zero per cent calf mortality a reality

Paul Meldrum
Dairy Supervisor
Macdonald Campus Farm

The health, productivity and reproductive efficiency of your dairy herd three years from now is largely dependent on how you look after your young stock. In the next few columns, I will discuss ways to achieve a zero per cent calf mortality, and how to keep your calves and heifers healthy and growing. That way, they can enter the milking string well grown at 24 months and ready to produce to their potential. The information will be gleaned from our experience at Macdonald Campus Farm, and from the hundreds of farms I have visited over the last three decades.

According to industry standards, an acceptable mortality rate is one per cent after birth and up to three per cent by weaning. Nonetheless, zero calf mortality is attainable. By that, I mean that if a calf hits the ground alive and in good shape, it stays that way. There will always be the still-borns and difficult births where even a vet cannot get the calf out alive. There's not a lot we can do about those, and they can be frustrating, so it's even more important to ensure that those calves that do enter this world alive maintain their relative health.

Let's start with where they are born. A maternity pen is the best place because the cow is not tied, she's free to get up and attend to her calf right away, and she's easily restrained if you have to assist. Ideally, the pen has a sand base. If it has a cement floor, it is covered with rubber mats or a mattress (bedding packs work well too in this regard).

In all of these cases, there should be lots of clean bedding, preferably straw or chopped hay. I cannot stress this enough. A calf born in wet, dirty conditions is a calf that stands a good chance of getting sick. Bacteria can enter through the mouth or the umbilical cord, and at this point the calf has essentially no immune system, so you're already behind the eight ball. Shavings or sawdust are better than no bedding at all, but not by much. E-coli is often present in this type of bedding, and wet sawdust provides the perfect medium for explosive growth of this deadly bacteria.

For those working in older facilities where cows must calve in their stalls, lots of clean straw or hay piled up to the level of the stall in a 180 degree radius behind the cow will do. When you move the newborn calf to the front of the cow, make sure there is ample bedding here as well. A bare slippery manger is no place for a newborn to try to take its first steps. Tie the calf so it doesn't go on tour. A calf's instinct to head to the udder as soon as it can is amazingly strong and it is inevitable that it will wobble past the 'lunch cart' and into the gutter where a navel infection is sure to result.

Cows calving on pasture is an option as long as that pasture is not in the back 40, but close to the barn where you can check frequently and easily bring the cow in if she is having difficulty. It is a time-consuming and frustrating exercise to bring a cow to the barn from a distant pasture when

the hooves are protruding and she is simply trying to find a quiet, out-of-the-way place to have her calf. It's stressful to both you and the cow, and the chances of a successful calving—and the cow shedding her placenta after—are greatly reduced.

There are a couple of other things you can do to prevent retained placentas (RPs). A vaccine shot of Muse and Vitamin A & D three weeks prior to calving will help to reduce the incidence of RPs. Although not scientific, some producers feel warm water for the cow just after calving will help expel the placenta. In any event, a cow's body temperature drops at calving, so warm water will help bring her body temperature back up without using her energy. It will satiate her thirst and prompt her to keep licking her calf.

Remember, calving is the most stressful period in a cow's life, and the more we do to eliminate stress, the higher the chances of a successful birth and a smooth transition onto the milking line.

In the next edition of "Devotion to Dairy," I will discuss the all-important first meal and some of the things we need to do to give the newborn calf every possible advantage so that it will not just survive, but thrive.

Paul Meldrum is Dairy Supervisor at McGill University's Macdonald Campus Farm. In the past, he has run successful dairy operations in both Ontario and New York state, hosted and produced CJOH TV's "Valley Farmer," and has been heard on agriculture reports for CBC Radio Noon in Ottawa.

Five crucial weeks for supply management

The four key players—the United States, the European Union, India and Brazil—who were meeting in Germany on June 19 to 21, 2007 were unable to find a basis for agreement that would lead the way for the 150 member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO). As a result, the chances of reaching a settlement in the negotiations, initiated in 2001 in Doha, Qatar, by the end of 2007 have been greatly reduced. In fact, experts are wondering how the WTO's director-general, Pascal Lamy, will be able to hammer out a general agreement by the end of July 2007 with 150 countries around the table when four among them failed to do so.

The U.S. was hoping for significant progress from these advance talks, which would have paved the way for the renewal of the 'fast track,' a process that allows a trade agreement to be passed outright without amendments. According to the experts, without significant progress over the next few weeks, the whole round of negotiations could be sidetracked until after 2010, notably because of the American presidential elections that are slated for 2008.

The chairman of the WTO agriculture negotiations, New-Zealander Crawford Falconer, intends to table a modalities document during the week of July 2, 2007. This text will form the basis to obtain the sought-after objectives for agriculture with regard to the three main pillars, namely domestic support, export subsidies and market access.

Sigh of relief

The meeting of the four key players (G-4) ended rather abruptly three days before the scheduled deadline. Australia and Japan did not even have a chance to join them as planned. The developed Western nations and the developing nations cite different reasons for the failure. Brazil and India slammed the door after realizing that the U.S. was not willing to reduce their domestic support program to approximately 12 billion dollars. The American delegate for trade, Susan Schwab, held the limit at \$17 billion, or \$5 billion more than the goal held by the developing countries in the G-20 group. In addition, India and Brazil did not look favorably on the demands of the rich nations to substantially lower the tariff barriers put into place by the emerging nations, to protect their industrial products. Schwab, on the other hand, attributed the failure to the inflexibility of the emerging nations.

Those defending the productions under supply management, which were strongly threatened by the proposals on the table at the WTO, can only be delighted with this turn of events. The GO5, the Coalition for a Fair Farming Model-Supply Management and Quebec's Minister of Agriculture, Laurent Lessard, declared on June 19 that the proposed terms would have disastrous consequences on the dairy, egg and poultry sectors. These sectors represent 40 per cent of the total agricultural revenue in Quebec, or \$2.5 billion.

The ministers of agriculture for Quebec and Ontario, Laurent Lessard and Leona Dombrowsky, respectively, announced that they are planning to use the annual meeting of the federal and provincial ministers of Agriculture, scheduled for June 26 to 29 in Whistler, British Columbia, to maintain pressure on the federal government. They believe that Ottawa must utilize all available methods to obtain a positive outcome at the WTO for the Canadian productions under supply management. The GO5 Coalition considers that it is Canada's duty to negotiate special measures to protect supply management, just as Norway, Iceland and Switzerland have been successful in doing.

Jean-Charles Gagné
LTCN 2007-06-28

Quebec wants positive results at WTO

Union des producteurs agricoles (UPA) President Laurent Pellerin had some rather shocking words for the press recently when asked to describe his organization's expectations about the federal government and its negotiator in the latest round of talks initiated by the World Trade Organization (WTO).

"It is like a boxing match," said Pellerin. "When he comes back from his round, we are the ones who will decide whether his nose is bleeding too much."

During a press conference in Quebec City on Tuesday, Pellerin reminded the federal government of its promise to obtain "a positive result" for the sectors under supply management at the end of

the present round of negotiations. He was accompanied by Quebec's minister of *Agriculture, des Pêcheries et de l'Alimentation* (MAPAQ), Laurent Lessard, who asserted that he was "more determined than ever" to help Quebec farmers get satisfaction.

The two men were accompanied by the presidents of the *Fédération des producteurs de lait du Québec*, Marcel Groleau, the *Éleveurs de volailles du Québec*, Martin Dufresne, the *Fédération des producteurs d'oeufs de consommation du Québec*, Serge Lefebvre, the *Syndicat des producteurs d'oeufs d'incubation du Québec*, Gyslain Loyer, and the *Coop fédérée*, Denis Richard, all partners in the GO5 coalition.

Pellerin is pressing the Canadian government to become actively involved in present negotiations in order to promote supply management. He noted that the reference document tabled last April by the president of the agriculture negotiation committee, Crawford Falconer, would have disastrous results for Quebec's dairy, poultry and egg sectors.

Four members of the G4 countries—the U.S., the European Union, India and Brazil—are in fact holding a meeting regarding the new negotiation proposal. However, in spite of some apprehension, Pellerin believes that Canada can make a difference. "Contrary to some other small countries, Canada has significant expertise regarding international trade," affirmed Pellerin. "Canada knows what has been beneficial and catastrophic in past international trade rules. We are working on the domestic front to satisfy the needs of our citizens and we are also working on export markets. If there is a will to put in the effort, Canada can be an expert negotiator to obtain the 'best deal' possible for the entire Canadian farm sector and even exert influence on the other countries."

In contrast to the UNESCO situation, Agriculture Minister Laurent Lessard does not believe that Quebec would be better off with its own seat at the negotiation table. He feels that to date, Quebec's interests have been well represented by Canada and that "it has served us well." He declared that he has written to all his provincial and federal counterparts to reiterate that Ottawa has the support of Quebec and the other provinces. He also intends to bring up the subject at the annual meeting of the country's agriculture ministers next week.

"When we demand and when we insist, people come through," asserted Pellerin. "I want this determination to be deeply anchored in the federal government's approach. The American 'fast track' will end this fall and there will be an opportunity to negotiate. We are definitely calling on the federal government to take on its responsibilities so that we get results."

Pierre-Yvon Bégin
LTCN 2007-06-21

An increase of 24 million pounds of maple syrup quota

An historic decision has just been made by the representatives of Quebec's maple syrup producers, at a meeting of the extended Board of Directors in Quebec City on June 14.

The extended board of the *Fédération des producteurs acéricoles du Québec* (FPAQ) approved an important project to increase bulk maple syrup production quotas for 2008. If the *Régie des marchés agricoles et alimentaires du Québec* (RMAAQ) confirms the decision, it could mean no less than 24 million pounds of new quota. "This will reduce the credibility of those who were criticizing the new marketing system," declared Pierre Lemieux, president of the FPAQ, who believes that the quota increase may also serve as an additional tool to come to an amicable agreement with producers who were bypassing the marketing agency. Lemieux also thinks that the change will introduce a positive note in relations with processors, since producers are showing their seriousness by not waiting for a shortage before acting.

Of the total 24 million pounds, some 10.5 million will be reserved for new taps. Another portion of about 14 million pounds will go to existing producers, who will see their quotas increase from 75 per cent to 90 per cent of the average of their best two years, which constitutes what is known as 'temporary,' or 'interim,' quota.

Risk of a shortage

The decision was a result of a poor yield last spring of a mere 69 million pounds, of which about 51 million will be graded by the marketing agency. With sales estimated at about 75 million pounds for this year's production, the inventory reserve should dwindle to between eight and 15 million pounds. For 2007 alone, it is predicted that the inventories will drop by between 20 and 30 million pounds. Previously, stocks were over 60 million pounds and the strategic reserve required to avoid shortage had been set at about 30 million pounds. "If we do nothing, there is a very high probability that we will run out of supply," explained Charles-Félix Ross, the secretary-general of the FPAQ.

New producers

About 1.2 million pounds of quota will be given to new producers who do not have shares in any of the 7,300 existing maple operations. An evaluation grid with five criteria (business plan, education, experience, residence in the production region and product processing on the farm) will be used in the selection of candidates. An interim quota of 2.5 pounds per tap will be granted to a maximum of 25,000 taps. A draw may be necessary.

Another 6.3 million pounds will go to consolidate enterprises that wish to convert from pails to tubing and for expansion projects. Those who convert to tubing can get an interim quota of 1.1 additional pounds per tap. For existing producers wishing to expand, 2.5 pounds per extra tap will be available, but the total number of taps in the sugar bush must not exceed 25,000 following expansion. Initially, the first 3,000 taps will be allotted. If there are still available pounds, they will be dealt out in blocks of 2,000 taps until the entire quota for the category has been distributed. New taps may be on new lots, or on operating lots where production potential is

not completely used. A maximum of 18 per cent of the new taps will be granted on public land, in order to respect the present ratios.

There is a final three million pounds designated for growth projects, to help “restructure poorly structured producers.” A ten per cent increase in the interim quota will be granted to those who can show that they delivered more than 95 per cent of their quota for at least two years between 2004 and 2007.

Two other measures that were passed by the board on June 14 are worthy of mention: priority payments and the obligation to fill your quota. Priority payments will mean that 85 per cent of the quota (which is calculated by taking 90 per cent of the interim quota) will be paid out first. If there is a surplus in any given year, the remaining 15 per cent will be paid in proportion to sales. Furthermore, syrup delivered but not sold will be pasteurized from now on, with the costs assumed by the marketing agency.

The obligation to fill quota will be evaluated on the average over five years. The maple producer must deliver at least 85 per cent of his quota, on the average, if he wishes to keep the same quota. A year out of production can be eliminated from the calculation in the case of a “*force majeure*” that prevents the producer from undertaking his production season. The idea behind this measure is to permit better planning, since an average of 2.1 million pounds of quota per year are not delivered.

Approval necessary

The modification allowing an increase of producers’ interim quota from 75 per cent to 90 per cent can be decided upon by the board of directors. For the rest of the changes, they must be approved by the RMAAQ. The RMAAQ can approve a modification as written or it could decide to call for a public hearing or other type of consultation.

The FPAQ has confirmed that it has already held consultations among 2,500 producers last spring regarding the criteria used for the proposed change to quota rules. In fact, a large majority of the extended board of directors and the entire official board of directors approved the changes. According to the FPAQ, the only point that caused a more heated debate was the 25,000 tap ceiling for expansion projects. “We have to send a clear signal,” insisted Charles-Félix Ross, underlining the necessity to re-establish an adequate reserve to respond to increased demand without running out of supply.

It is also necessary to give the federation enough time to deal with requests for new taps and for expansion projects, as well as allowing producers time to plan their investments and the resulting workload. In short, January would be too late to have an impact on the 2008 season. The FPAQ has also left the door open for additional changes, since nothing has been officially decided for the 2009 season.

Thierry Larivière
LTCN 2007-06-21

Quebec won't budge on yellow margarine

The Quebec government is standing firm and continues to refuse margarine manufacturers the right to use the characteristic colour of butter for their product. The minister of *Développement économique, de l'Innovation et de l'Exportation*, Raymond Bachand, had to defend his government's position at a recent meeting in Newfoundland with his provincial counterparts.

“The subject was briefly brought up, to get an update—that's all,” confirmed the minister's press secretary, Isabelle Migneault. She added that Minister Bachand supports the *status quo*. In March 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada acknowledged Quebec's right to prohibit the sale of butter-colored margarine within its borders. However, a group of experts under the Agreement on Internal Trade pronounced a few months later that this ban constituted a trade barrier. “We have been defending Quebec's traditional position,” declared André Menard, press secretary for Minister of Agriculture Laurent Lessard. “Colour does not constitute a trade barrier,” he added. “The proof is that 50 per cent of the margarine sold in Quebec is produced in Ontario.”

The Agreement on Internal Trade allows provinces to apply penalties to those among them that refuse to comply with a decision of a group of experts. Vegetable oil processors believe that Quebec's restrictions have caused them to lose \$25 million to date. In principle, the opposed provinces—Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba—could impose an equivalent embargo on Quebec products.

Pierre-Yvon Bégin
LTCN 2007-06-21

Agriculture in the Gaspésie-Les-Îles region

It seems that the agricultural community of the Gaspésie-Îles de la Madeleine region has gotten through the turmoil and agitation of the past. The region's UPA federation appeared before the Commission on the Future of Quebec Agriculture and Agri-food (CAAAQ) with an optimistic message regarding the future of agriculture and the protection of the environment.

Following the meeting, Nicole Lapointe, the president of the *Fédération de l'UPA de la Gaspésie-Les-Îles*, was pleased with the day's outcome and particularly with the optimism shown by the region's producers.

“The arrival of the commission gave us an opportunity to meet together to discuss agriculture and its priorities in our region,” she said.

Nonetheless, several crucial issues must be resolved regarding the development and consolidation of agriculture over the next few months in order to ensure its future.

On the subject of the Programme d'assurance stabilisation des revenus agricoles (ASRA), the president of the *Syndicat des producteurs de boeufs de la Gaspésie-Les-Îles* (SPBGI), Marc Cyr, did not pull any punches when demanding that the Quebec government keep the farm income stabilization program. Without this program, he said, “a large majority of beef farms would simply disappear and the continued existence of production would be at risk.”

Groceries and “terroir” products

Since the centralized purchasing policy of the large supermarket chains does not leave much place for local retailers, the development of agriculture in the Gaspésie region, and in all the other regions of Quebec, is necessarily dependant on better access to local and regional markets.

Beef producers—along with the *Table de concertation de la Gaspésie* and the whole farming and agri-food community of the Gaspésie region—are demanding that Quebec pass legislation to identify 100 per cent Quebec products and that promotion campaigns be undertaken to inform consumers of the advantages of buying local products. Farmers of the region also insist that the Quebec government adopt regulations which would force large food chains to increase the percentage of their purchases of local and regional produce.

Another bone of contention between producers and the government concerns solid and liquid manure storage and management. The region’s farmers are asking the Environment Minister Line Beauchamp to finally recognize the *Guide de bonnes pratiques pour la gestion des fumiers de bovins de boucherie* (Best practices guide for manure handling in beef production).

The Gaspésie region has 130 beef farms, 50 dairy farms and about 20 sheep producers. The secretary of the SPBGI, Jean-Paul St-Onge, fears for the future if numbers continue to decrease. “Farm services (animal transportation, veterinarians, consultants, the Caplan Coop) could disappear and producers would suffer,” he declared.

Slaughterhouse

Without any slaughterhouse facilities, the region’s farmers have been calling for one for some time. Also, the costs associated with the collection of dead animals are considerable, as well as the recuperation of specified risk materials

Alain Lavoie
LTCN 2007-06-21

EDITORIAL

Can Canada follow Norway and Iceland at the WTO?

Laurent Pellerin
UPA President

After months of ‘marking time’ following the ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) at the end of 2005 in Hong Kong, agriculture negotiations have moved to a new level.

The director-general of the WTO, Pascal Lamy, confirmed last week that there was a good probability of reaching an agreement by the end of the summer. In fact, that could happen soon if the commerce ministers of the G4 countries (USA, the European Union, India and Brazil) can come to some agreement at their meeting in Potsdam, Germany this week.

Once again, our productions under supply management are threatened. The reference document tabled at the end of April by the chairman of the agriculture negotiations, Crawford Falconer, calls for significant tariff reductions, which would prevent Canada from controlling its imports in the dairy, egg and poultry sectors, and which would lead to disastrous results.

The stakes are high: these sectors generate an income of \$2.5 billion, or over 40 per cent of Quebec’s total agricultural revenue. They create 75,000 jobs and generate additional economic benefits of several billion dollars.

Furthermore, countries smaller than Canada have succeeded in defending their unique characteristics. As proof of this, Falconer’s document describes specific terms and conditions for Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, who were able to plead the disproportionate impact that the proposed measures would have on their agriculture.

Why not Canada as well? All the more so since the U.S. and the European Union persist with their ‘dumping’ approach on world markets and their staggering farm subsidies, while thumbing their noses at the reductions sought after by the WTO.

The door is open and other players are not hesitating to take their positions! It is now up to Canada to immediately assert its rights and defend the vulnerability of its supply-management productions in order to obtain special treatment as well. The clock is ticking and every maneuver should be directed toward a single objective: “zero negative impact” for our dairy and poultry sectors.

Strengthened by the support received from the Quebec government and its Minister of Agriculture, the members of GO5, the Coalition for a Fair Farming Model-Supply Management, are calling on Prime Minister Harper and his agriculture and trade ministers, Chuck Strahl and David Emerson, to also take up the cause to defend supply management, a system which permits

family farms to gain their livelihood from the marketplace without financial support from the state, while causing no distortion to world markets.

In this regard, they should be mindful that we are their strongest allies when it comes to discussing the best strategies to be used to negotiate and identify the tools that will permit the Canadian government to come out as winners in the Doha Round.

Canada must seize this opportunity to exercise its leadership on the international stage. Supply management can be shown to be a valid alternative to the all-out liberalization of agricultural trade, as advocated by the WTO. Like food sovereignty and collective marketing, supply management represents a promising path for farmers the world over, impoverished by more than ten years of globalization.

The federal government is responsible for the WTO negotiations and the subsequent results. However, these results will be considered positive if, and only if, our dairy and poultry producers come out as winners in these negotiations.

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Canada's BSE regulations more strict than the U.S.

With the ban on specified risk materials (SRM) in animal feed having come into effect on July 12, industry representatives are arguing that the change will not be without consequences for the competitiveness of Canadian beef on the export market. "At the last round table discussions regarding beef, the slaughterhouses were asking the government for \$50 million over two years in order to maintain their competitiveness," explained the president of the *Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec*, (FPBQ), Michel Dessureault. "Cargill is even threatening to close its plant in High River, Alberta," he continued.

Similar to Canada, the U.S. banned all SRM for human consumption in 2004. In July of that same year, the American Food and Drug Administration (FDA) opened a period of consultations on the prohibition of SRM in animal feed. At that time, a Harvard University study showed that this measure would reduce the risks of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in the U.S. by 88 per cent.

In November 2006, at a meeting of the Canada/U.S. Consultative Committee on Agriculture, Canadian representatives asked about the progress of the American regulations. Without answering directly, the FDA promised to give an update on the file at a later date. So far, the U.S. has not made its intentions clear.

Rumours in Ottawa

In Ottawa, the agriculture critic for the Bloc Québécois, André Bellevance, declared that he was quite worried about the extra costs associated with the elimination of SRM. “By not requiring reciprocity on the part of the U.S., Minister Strahl is hindering the competitiveness of Canadian livestock producers vis-à-vis their American counterparts,” Bellevance stressed. “What is the minister waiting for before imposing the same rules on the Americans as are imposed here to protect public health?” Chuck Strahl limited his response by saying, “We are working closely with our American neighbours and with other countries in the world so that borders will be completely open for cattle more than 30 months old.”

A rush to the south

With the possible re-opening of the U.S. border to Canadian cattle born after March 1, 1999, the Colbex slaughterhouse is worried about its supply. “It is disturbing. Colbex will be in the same situation as other Canadian slaughterhouses in terms of loss of competitiveness. Why does the government not apply the same rules to meat coming from outside the country?” asked Dessureault. Besides Quebec, Colbex gets its supply from the Maritimes, Ontario, as well as from Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. “Presently, six cows out of ten come from outside Quebec,” confirmed the FPBQ president. The slaughterhouse is currently operating below capacity.

Julie Mercier
LTCN 2007-06-21

The Charest government sticks to plans made for Autoroute 30

The Charest government will not back down on the proposed extension of Autoroute 30. The route will pass through the agricultural zone and will eliminate 600 hectares of Quebec’s best farmland.

“There is no turning back,” declared Minister of Transport Julie Boulet. Last week, opposition MNAs took advantage of the credit review on various department budgets to bombard Boulet as well as Agriculture Minister Laurent Lessard with questions on the subject.

All efforts were a lost cause, however, with Boulet using reports from the *Bureau d’audiences publiques sur l’environnement* (BAPE) to support her government’s position. She noted that the BAPE has indicated a preference for the southern route, firstly as an issue of safety. Contrary to the northern route, which would follow the existing Route 132, she explained that the southern route allows the possibility to separate the local and transit traffic.

“The matter is now settled,” declared Boulet, who maintains that the costs are comparable and that new traffic studies show that it would be necessary to construct a six-lane autoroute if the 132 were chosen.

“Her choice will cost between \$150 million and \$200 million more,” exclaimed the *Action démocratique du Québec* (ADQ) critic for Transport and MNA for Blainville, Pierre Gingras. The official opposition party tried every possible means to get clarification on the cost of the work done to date in the agricultural zone. If \$4 million was spent in 2006, then it will be \$50 million that will be spent this year on the project, according to Henri Gilbert, director of Transportation for the Island of Montreal.

”There are important savings to be made and the ADQ caucus favors the route following the 132,” acknowledged the MNA from Huntington and opposition critic for Agriculture, Albert DeMartin.

The spokesperson on Agriculture for the second opposition party, Maxime Arseneau, asked the Minister of Agriculture if he was “comfortable” with the decision to have the Autoroute 30 pass through the agricultural zone.

“It is the *Commission de protection du territoire agricole de Québec* (CPTAQ) that is the watchdog of the green zone,” Laurent Lessard initially stated to defend himself. The MNA from Îles-de-la-Madeleine came back with the argument that the CPTAQ had, in fact, made three unfavorable reports on the southern route and that the government chose to ignore them all.

“Yes, it is always difficult to see a reduction of the agricultural zone,” acknowledged Lessard, while adding that the CPTAQ did make recommendations to reduce the negative impacts on agriculture. The president of the CPTAQ, Roger Lefebvre, confirmed that the recommendations by his institution were not binding on the government.

The southern route through the green zone also upsets the Kahnawake Mohawk community. The spokesperson for the Mohawk Grand Council, David LaHache, confirmed that the agricultural zone that is to be used for the southern route is disputed territory by his band.

“It is Mohawk land,” he declared, adding that negotiations are scheduled to begin soon with Quebec on this subject. He indicated that the Grand Council favors the extension of Autoroute 30 along Route 132. “The highway is already there,” he asserted. “Why build another road? It doesn’t make sense.”

“It is an unacceptable project, both for agriculture and from a budgetary point of view. It is money spent for nothing,” added the president of the *Comité des citoyens*, Vivianne Corriveau. She stated that the MNA for La Prairie, Jean Dubuc, was severely defeated on this question during the last election. Corriveau also added that the southern route would cause an ecological disaster, in particular, with an increase in greenhouse gases.

Pierre-Yvon Bégin
LTCN 2007-06-21

Autoroute 30 “a major slap in the face,” says Mario Dumont

“From the perspective of protecting the agricultural zone, it’s still a major slap in the face,” commented Mario Dumont, leader of Quebec’s official opposition, regarding the Liberal government’s decision to stick to its choice of the southern route through the green zone for the extension of Autoroute 30, south of Montreal.

“From the perspective of urban planning, it continues to be a monumental error, contrary to all modern planning methods,” added the leader of the *Action démocratique du Québec*. Attending a press conference last week in Quebec City to assess the last parliamentary session, Dumont repeated that he hoped the government would reverse its decision on the matter. He also had to explain why his party did not join the *Parti québécois* on a motion demanding that the government stop work on the autoroute.

“It was not in the form of a bill. There is nothing in parliamentary procedures to allow us to stop the work,” he explained. Dumont also took the opportunity to remind those attending that the Liberal member for La Prairie, Jean Dubuc, had finished third in the March 26 elections, thus putting the Liberal party in a vulnerable position on this issue.

“If they had chosen the Route 132 option, we would be driving on Autoroute 30 today,” he added, accusing the Liberals of needlessly delaying the completion of the autoroute by changing its direction.

Being questioned on this matter while giving his own assessment of the session, Premier Jean Charest preferred to defer to his “expert on matters concerning Autoroute 30,” Jean-Marc Fournier, the MNA for Chateauguay.

“We made a promise to the population, and we are proceeding with it,” declared Fournier. He also justified the decision by referring to the BAPE report, which favoured the southern route through the agricultural zone. He also recalled that before the publication of the BAPE report, both his government and the *Parti québécois* had promised to follow its recommendations.

With regard to the risk of provoking retaliation from the Mohawk community in Kahnawake, the Minister of Revenue and government house leader also cited the First Nations’ position at the BAPE hearings. “When they appeared before the BAPE,” he asserted, “they (Kahnawake) declared that they preferred the southern route through the agricultural zone, not the Route 132 option.”

Therefore, the Charest government says it is not receptive to the recent about-face, where the new Mohawk Band Council now claims ancestral rights to the old *Sault-Saint-Louis Seigneurie* land within the southern corridor.

Minister Fournier also noted that the *Action démocratique* party had “several variations” of their choice of routes, the most recent one being in favour of the southern option, as far as he could see.

Agriculture critic for the *Parti québécois* and ex-minister of agriculture Maxime Arseneau attempted to emphasize the rights of the farmers during MAPAQ’s budget review. He noted that the producers directly affected by the extension of Autoroute 30 were not heard by the *Commission de protection du territoire agricole* (CPTAQ). “The government never permitted these farmers to be heard,” he asserted. “I don’t think it is too late for them to be heard by the commission.”

Pierre-Yvon Bégin
LTCN 2007-06-28

Measures that focus on quality

Cow-calf producers have put into place two measures to improve the quality of feeder calves sold through specialized auctions: notably, supplementary marketing fees for non-standard calves and calf vaccinations.

Eve Martin agronome
Development and Marketing
Calf Marketing Agency
FPBQ

In August 2002, an extra five-dollar fee for each non-standard calf (poorly castrated or not castrated, poorly dehorned or not dehorned, off-type) was instigated. Two years later, in August 2004, this fee was increased to \$15 per non-standard calf.

As shown in the above table, the percentage of calves with horns decreased significantly, going from 12.5 per cent to 7.5 per cent. As for non-castrated calves, the percentage dropped from five per cent to three per cent between 2003 and 2004 and then became stable at that level. Poorly castrated calves represent approximately 1.5 per cent of calves sold at specialized auctions each year.

This deterrent measure has been effective in attaining its objective and the money collected allows the marketing agency to develop structuring projects for the sale of feeder calves while working to improve quality at the same time.

Calf vaccinations at specialized auctions is evolving

It's official! **The vaccination protocol for beef calves sold at specialized auctions will be modified, starting January 1, 2008.** The new protocol is made up of the following two schemes:

It should be noted that the following documents should always accompany the calves sold at specialized auctions:

- 2007-2008 vaccination report, duly completed and signed (available soon)
- Proof of purchase of the vaccines used.

By implementing this new protocol, Quebec's specialized auction circuit for beef calves will continue to distinguish itself as a leader in Canada regarding feeder calf vaccinations.

For calves sold in the fall of 2007, the former protocol based on four vaccination schemes will still apply.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the marketing agency by phone at 450-679-0540, ext. 8891 or talk to your veterinarian.

Biofuels and SRM: for a sustainable global solution.

Michel Dessureault
FPBQ president

As of July 12, specified risk materials (SRM) must be eliminated from all animal feed. In order to comply with this new regulation in the short term, beef slaughterhouses have two options. On the one hand, they could decide to destroy, incinerate or bury all of the by-products resulting from the slaughter of ruminants. However, this would generate significant costs, with little or no revenues. On the other hand, slaughterhouses could put into place mechanisms to segregate (treat separately) the SRM from other by-products. In this way, these by-products could continue to be incorporated into livestock feed destined for monogastrics.

This second solution will, however, require considerable investment. The risk of cross-contamination between SRM and non-SRM would still remain throughout the by-product management chain. Nevertheless, segregation seems to be an unavoidable step, particularly since it will permit the recycling of by-products. It is therefore urgent that the federal and provincial budgets designated for the treatment of SRM be confirmed.

Governments must also recognize the necessity of recuperating and putting these by-products to good use. The current dead animal collection network is lacking in many respects. Several regions are not adequately covered, and globally, a large proportion of the carcasses are not recuperated. It cannot be seen as an effective network. It will be even less so if collection fees are increased.

The future is in biofuels

The use of animal by-products to make biofuels is like killing two birds with one stone. First, it is not necessary to separate the SRM and non-SRM by-products, which practically eliminates the risk of cross-contamination. In addition, this process can generate revenues from the recycling of the by-products. Carcasses of dead ruminants, which are considered as SRM, could therefore be safely incorporated into the process.

In the long term, the transformation of animal by-products into biofuel represents the only logical option for the industry. At the last annual general meeting of the *Fédération des producteurs de bovins du Québec*, a resolution was adopted, asking for maximum cooperation and collaboration between the various stakeholders in the animal production sector. Arguments in favour of this solution are growing: a reduction of the risks regarding health and the environment, as well as the necessity to increase our alternative energy sources.

Farmers need support to proceed with this important project. It is now up to our governments to be as visionary as we are. They must assume their role as facilitators, by creating partnerships that will result in the completion of promising projects. In an area where public health and safety issues are involved, it is up to all of us to be responsible and work together. One thing is for certain—farmers must finally be considered as important players in this process.

Managing your alfalfa cuts: how to combine productivity with longevity

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Although it is a perennial plant, there are several factors that can influence the survival of alfalfa. Of course, some of them are uncontrollable (snow cover, ice, winter temperature fluctuations), but fortunately many others remain within the farmer's control: the choice of disease-resistant varieties, soil pH, soil fertility and finally, the cutting schedule. This last factor is particularly important since it is directly linked to the proper management of the alfalfa's root reserves, which follow approximately the same pattern, whether it be after a cut of hay or during its first growth in the spring.

Week 0-3: the alfalfa plant uses up the reserves stored in the tap root; it is in a 'deficit' mode and reserves will be at their lowest by the end of this stage.

Week 3-6: leaf growth should be sufficient for the plant to start accumulating new reserves; the “accumulation” mode.

After 6 weeks: the plant should have accumulated the maximum reserves and have attained the full bloom stage. However, in practice, the crop is often harvested before this stage.

In fact, the recommended stage of growth for harvesting is early bloom (for legumes) and early heading (for grasses). Nonetheless, the following points should always be kept in mind:

- Allowing less than 35 days (five weeks) between cuts will weaken the alfalfa and reduce both its chances of surviving the winter and its first-cut yield the following season.
- It is recommended to allow alfalfa to attain the full bloom stage at least once during the season (ideally at the last cut), because this allows the plant to start growing rapidly in the spring, thus resulting in an earlier first cut.
- Do not cut in September. Why? Because in Quebec, the first killing frost generally occurs at the beginning of October and the plant would not have enough time to replenish its reserves before winter.
- The date of the first cut is critical (June 10 at the latest) if you are to succeed in getting three cuts off before September 1. Leave the last growth in the field to allow the alfalfa to accumulate food reserves and to encourage the maximum snow cover.
- If another cut is taken after a good killing frost in the fall (beginning of October), it will not cause a loss of plant reserves. However, it will increase the risk of winterkill. Leave at least 15-20 cm (six to eight inches) of stubble or leave unharvested strips in the field, in order to help retain as much snow as possible.
- In eastern Ontario and even in southern Quebec, it is not recommended to make four cuts per year.

Always keep in mind that we are working with a perennial plant and although we may worry more about what we can see—that is, the yield—we shouldn’t forget what cannot be seen below the ground—the plant reserves!