

NEWS RELEASE



Farm, Food & Beyond: Our Commitment to Sustainability **Initiative unveiled at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show**

(Woodstock) – September 15, 2015 – *The Farm, Food & Beyond: Our Commitment to Sustainability* initiative, was launched by farm and food industry leaders today in a special presentation on the opening day at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show in Woodstock.

This collaborative initiative of Ontario's farmers and food and beverage processors, will build upon the success of the Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) program. By expanding the scope into a whole farm sustainability plan, this project addresses not only environmental practices but also economic and social issues important for sustainability. Together, the farm and food community is taking a supply chain approach to sustainable production and processing.

The initiative has been developed by the following supporters: The Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA), Christian Farmers' Federation of Ontario (CFFO), the Presidents' Council, Ontario Agri Food Technologies, the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA), Farm & Food Care Ontario and in close collaboration with Provision Coalition

Since 1991, more than 38,000 Ontario farm families have completed an Environmental Farm plan (EFP), resulting in millions of dollars in environmental improvements on their farms. This new initiative will build on the success of the EFP program with four objectives:

- To guide farmers in the identification of needs/opportunities for improvement in sustainability
- To assure/inform the general public about these transformations
- To help address growing requirements by food manufacturers and retailers for assurance that farm products have been produced in a sustainable manner
- That the supply chain is working together towards sustainability improvements from farm to fork

In explaining the initiative, Dr. Gord Surgeoner, Chair of the Sustainable Farm Coalition steering committee, said that the project "demonstrates our commitment to people, our planet and profitability. Just as was the case with the EFP program which has served Ontario agriculture well for 25 years, we want to create a system that reduces redundancy, is farmer friendly and provides a platform that will serve for another quarter century."

In addressing the crowd, Don McCabe, President of the OFA, said that, "Farmers and agri-business increasingly have to respond to public perceptions, media scrutiny and consumer demands. We as farmers work hard on social responsibility and animal care. This initiative will help demonstrate that to our consumers."

Lorne Small, President of the CFFO, said, "Without profitability at the farm level, there is no sustainability in the complete supply chain. Operating our farms in a socially and environmentally responsible way is also key to agricultural sustainability."

In his remarks, Scott Graham, Chairman of the Presidents' Council, commented, "We recognize that agriculture is diverse and that some commodities are already working on international and customer standards. We want to acknowledge these and not create duplication. This is about reducing redundancy."

Speaking on behalf of Farm & Food Care Ontario, Chairman John Maaskant said, "We as farmers have worked hard to care for our farm animals and our land. Farming – and producing food sustainably – needs to be scientifically verified, economically viable and ethically grounded. Millions of dollars in research and pre-existing programs like the national Codes of Practice for animal welfare are examples of that."

Alan Kruszel, President of OSCIA said, "The Environmental Farm Plan has been a tremendous success and we have been proud to deliver this self-learning process to thousands of farmers. We are excited to work with our partners to build upon the success of the EFP, enhancing it to become Farm & Food Sustainability Plans."

In wrapping up the program, Robert Cash, Chairman of the Provision Coalition expressed his support for the collaboration, "Food and beverage manufacturers are used to staying ahead of the curve. With the farm community, we are developing a sustainability program that will facilitate responsible sourcing, supply chain cooperation and more transparent food systems. Consumers are asking and together we are responding."

A report entitled *Our Commitment to Sustainability*, which is a basis for the long term initiative, is available online at www.sustainablefarms.ca.

This project is funded in part through *Growing Forward 2 (GF2)*, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative. The Agricultural Adaptation Council and Ontario Agri Food Technologies assists in the delivery of *GF2* in Ontario. It has also received support from the Grand River Agricultural Society.

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