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Agriview

Newfoundland and Labrador Agriculture



A New Crop of Farmers Steps Up

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Federation of Agriculture**

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On The Cover: A collage of photos from our Feature article.



Melvin J. Rideout
President

With another busy growing season behind us, and a provincial election well underway, it's a great time to think about policy as it relates to agriculture. I encouraged voters to think about agriculture as a campaign issue through social media and on the radio. As we elect a government to guide our province, we need to think about how we are going to source our food, how that impacts on food security and our economy as a whole. By the time you read this, the campaign will be over and the future impact of a new crop of MHAs on our industry will be a little clearer. We hope the Federation was able to have a positive impact on the policy discussions throughout the campaign.

On topics a little closer to the fields, most of the province had a fairly good growing season after a poor start and even poorer July. Some areas never did recover from the slow start, but by the end of the season, we made out better than most would have anticipated.

The Federation continues to move forward with exciting programs and projects. The Agrifoods and Garden Show returned to the Corner Brook Civic Centre this October where we had about 5,100 people attend. This year, we had

a pumpkin decorating contest with local schools and had over 200 entries. The pumpkins were auctioned near the end of the show, raising \$882 for the Westrock Community Centre. This was added to the donation of \$1 from every paid entry at the show for a total donation of \$3,853.

Another great part of the Agrifoods and Garden Show, now for two years running, is the Amazing Agriculture Adventure, organized through our Agriculture in the Classroom program. We hosted 25 grade 4 and 5 classes which visited 25 educational stations, learning about the agriculture industry. The students learned a lot while having fun.

We also are excited to see the new energy in the young farmers' organization. We partnered with the NL Young Farmers' Forum (NLYFF) this year to help revitalize the group and it appears like it is having an impact. The young farmers just finished hosting their Leadership Summit, which saw about 35 participants. The event brought in top guest speakers to cover topics which are interesting and insightful to young farmers in the province. Tied to that event, NLYFF had its annual general meeting, where the group saw the most interest in board positions in quite some time.

Another project we are working on is to partner with the Atlantic Canadian Organic Regional Network (ACORN) as it hosts a conference for local organic growers this winter.

One more conference to remind everyone about is NLFA's own annual general meeting and workshop. It is happening January 27 and 28 in Gander at the Hotel Gander. We hope to have a record number of farmers in attendance.

I would like to close by offering season's greetings to our members. Best wishes for happy holidays and a productive year ahead.

A New Crop of Farmers Steps Up: Profiling New Entrants

By Matthew Carlson

If you spend any time in farming circles, you will have heard about the rising age of farmers. In Newfoundland and Labrador the average age is fast approaching 60 years. There is, at the same time, a great recognition of the opportunity for new young farmers to get into the industry and fill more of the demand for fresh local food. That demand seems to be growing even faster than the average age is increasing.

So what to do about it? Both industry and government are in agreement that farming needs more young people. Programs like the Young Farmers' Initiative are working to draw attention to young farmers and the opportunities in the industry. This is being carried out through a partnership of the Federation of Agriculture and the NL Young Farmers' Forum (NLYFF). It is funded

through Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

Young people are already stepping up to join the industry, and telling their stories; and this may just be one of the better ways to encourage others to join.

The following briefly profiles some of our new farmers. Rodney Reid and Brad Smith are aspiring sheep farmers in central Newfoundland; Luke Strong is starting a cattle farm in Harcourt; and Richelle Coates and Graham Porter are new vegetable farmers in Conception Bay South.

Rodney and Brad of Exploits Meadow Farms

Rodney Reid and Brad Smith are setting up a new sheep farm called Exploits Meadow Farms in central



Land clearing at Exploits Meadow Farms. (L-R) Brad, Rodney.

Newfoundland. The ability to be their own bosses, contribute to food security in the province, and stay connected to nature is what drew them into farming as a career. As Rodney recently put it when he was the 'Young Farmer of the Week' on Twitter, they are "pioneering Exploits Meadow Farms out of the bush."

While this farm is new to Rodney and Brad, working in agriculture is not. Both are beekeepers and worked on a dairy farm on Prince Edward Island. Rodney has a family connection to farming as well, as his great uncle had an egg layer and pork operation, and his father and brother farm cranberries. While Brad doesn't have the same family connection to the industry, farming is always something he thought about and found interesting.

So far the biggest challenge in getting up and running has been obtaining land and securing funding to make a lot of this work happen. Hard work has paid off. Rodney and Brad have 100 acres right now, with another 400 in reserve for expansion.

With land clearing taking place and a business plan prepared, the farm is looking at a 2016 launch, with a starter flock set to arrive next fall. Fifty acres will be cleared by next summer, prior to the arrival of the sheep, which are likely to be either Rideau Arcott or Dorper.

As Rodney and Brad think about the future of their farm, they're excited about developing a local product, supporting the local market while employing local people and contributing to the local economy. The overall spirit of entrepreneurship has gripped them as they think about setting their own vision for the farm, which they hope will eventually include secondary processing



(L-R): Brad, Rodney. Photo by Joanne King.



The road to Exploits Meadow Farms. Photo by Joanne King.

as well. They are building the farm from scratch — the way they want it.

Luke of K & L Farms

Luke Strong is setting up his 200 acre farm in Harcourt. He chose farming as a career after spending time growing up on his grandfather Walter Young's farm. Farm equipment has always been a draw to Luke. As he puts it, "Ever since I could walk I was driving equipment." He looked at working in the oil patch but it didn't have the same appeal, and he recognized the respect people gave his grandfather as a farmer. To help him get his start,



Luke stands with a new piece of equipment for the new farm.

Luke's parents helped with farm equipment the same way they would have helped with college funds. He credits his parents William and Suzette as being a huge help in starting the farm, and is quick to point out that they help out on the farm wherever they can, including doing most of the paperwork.

The farm is well on its way. Of the 200 acres, 170 are for hay production, with a half-acre of vegetables, and a 22 acre test trial of spring wheat. There are 10 head of beef cattle on the farm now, and Luke hopes to one day get a dairy quota.

The biggest challenge for Luke so far has been financial — getting the necessary capital to start a farm and moving enough product at this early stage to pay the bills.

As Luke looks at the future of his farm he gets excited thinking about the possibilities. Every time he sees other farms that are doing well, he gets enthused about the thought of building his own to that level. Things that may not be favourite parts of the job for other farmers, also get Luke excited. This includes hard work, and early mornings. Overall he just loves the lifestyle and is eager to build on the great start he has had at K & L Farms. He sums it up by saying "It's not work... it's all play to me."

Richelle and Graham of Fire Hill Farms

Richelle Coates and Graham Porter can trace the start of their farm to one Sunday morning when they were watching their kids play on their cell phones. Richelle remembers thinking about getting them to work outdoors instead of staring at their phones. She and Graham got right to work on making that happen, and soon enough they were all outside working as a family, and the cellphones were all put away. From that small garden plot, the farm just kept expanding. They applied for a lease to get more space, and soon had an existing 10-acre agricultural lease transferred.

With Nathen, 17; Graham, 14; and Carsen, 12 all working on the farm, Richelle sees their family bonds strengthened and is really happy farming is a viable way to support their family.

Despite a number of challenges, which Richelle says include finding land, wildlife issues, the weather, and a shorter growing season, Fire Hill Farms has now been operating commercially for about a year. Richelle and Graham have applied for 120 new acres, and next year there are plans for a road-side stand. Currently the farm is spread out over six different pieces of land and sells its products primarily at the St. John's Farmers Market, with a bit of wholesaling happening as well.

Richelle is optimistic about her farm's future. She and Graham have given thought to one day opening a chalet and are well aware of the opportunity in the industry. She and Graham are in their early 30s and they are



Harvest time at Fire Hill Farms. Uncle Ted, a veteran farmer, drives the tractor.



Richelle and Graham's son Carsen at the Fire Hill stand at the St. John's Farmers Market.

thankful that they have lots of time to build the farm and are hopeful one of their kids will one day take over.

An Engaged Group

This new group of young farmers is stepping up off the farm too. Rodney and Brad are members of many industry associations and business groups, and both serve on the Young Farmers Board of Directors. Rodney also serves on the Federation of Agriculture board and attended the Canadian Young Farmers Conference this year. Luke became the central representative on the Young Farmers board about a month ago and has already attended events on behalf of the young farmers. Richelle and Graham are also regular attendees at young farmer events and are always eager to learn and participate.

With this new crop of farmers stepping up both on and off the farm, the demographic challenges could be

on the way to being addressed. If a few more young people are encouraged to do the same, we could start to see the rising age trend turn around. These new entrants to our industry make us confident about our future.

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Young Farmers Host Leadership Summit in St. John's

Expert guest speakers in farm business were invited to share information with young farmers in the province at the Young Farmers' Leadership Summit, which took place on November 3 and 4. The event, drew in about 35 attendees, provided great networking opportunities in addition to great presentations by Leona Dargis, Casey Langbroek, Brent VanKoughnet, and Jonathan Richler. The conference also hosted a young farmers' panel where local young farmers discussed some of the more unique and innovative things happen-

ing on their farms.

Funding to host the event was provided by Growing Forward 2, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.

We would like to thank Farm Credit Canada for sending speaker Brent VanKoughnet and the Department of Business, Tourism, Culture, and Rural Development for assisting attendees with travel costs.



Keynote speaker Leona Dargis speaks at the Leadership Summit.



Local young farmers participate in a panel at the event. (L-R): Chris Oram, Evan Murray, and David Simmons.

Upcoming Industry Events

NL Organic Conference

January 13 and 14, 2016
Comfort Inn, St. John's
Details soon at nlfa.ca

NLFA AGM & Workshop

January 27 and 28, 2016
Hotel Gander, Gander NL
Details soon at nlfa.ca

Provincial Agricultural Research: Research at a Glance

The Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) agriculture industry faces many challenges in striving to grow and diversify. A growing global population, global competition, climate change, bio-security risks, consolidation in the food industry, and a reliance on many of the agricultural inputs coming from outside of the province are all issues that need to be addressed in ensuring an adequate food supply for NL in the future.

Through a strong research and development program such as the Provincial Agriculture Research and Development Program (PARDP), the NL agriculture industry will confront challenges head-on and take advantage of opportunities that are ever present. This provincially led program is making significant contributions to science-based knowledge in our local climate.

Some of the highlights of the research being conducted in collaboration with industry this year are;

The First Newfoundland and Labrador Grape Wine Vineyard

Karen Kennedy, Fruit Crop Specialist, Forestry and Agrifoods Agency

In 2013, the first experimental vineyard in NL was constructed at the Pynn's Brook Agricultural Research Station. This project was put forth to determine if grapevines will grow, establish, and mature grapes to the appropriate brix levels in various Newfoundland climates. The first vineyard began modestly with 140 cold-hardy vines consisting of 11 red varieties and 5 white varieties. Since the initiation of this project, there are now 6 commercial vineyards on the Island to initiate a

commercial viticulture industry in NL with 7000 vines currently planted.



Ashley Mullins: Soybean Field in Cormack, NL

Commercial Soybean Production

Ashley Mullins, Alternative Feeds Coordinator, Forestry and Agrifoods Agency

As livestock farmers become more self-sufficient in feed production the demand for high-value, one-season crops is increasing. Soybean has been identified as an important addition to corn and grain cropping systems. This year (2015) was the first trial with soybean in NL with a total of six sites across the province. Soybean plants require a lot of heat to reach full maturity and because of this they were grown as a silage crop. Preliminary nutrient analy-

sis results are positive; feed value is similar to red clover and alfalfa. Soybean is an annual crop with lower establishment time than traditional forage and more options for weed control making it ideally suited for crop rotation systems.

Crop Rotation for Improved Yields

Ashley Mullins, Alternative Feeds Coordinator, Forestry and Agrifoods Agency

Corn silage is a high value crop for the dairy industry and subsequently many fields that were renovated to produce corn silage have had little to no rotation since its introduction. Corn production systems that include soybean as part of the rotation have proven to be quite productive in other regions. This year (2015) was the first of a multi-year rotation trial with three sites across

the province. Fields that had been in corn production for multiple years were spilt into three sections: corn; soybean; oats plus peas. In 2016 all sections will be planted with corn and soil health and corn yield will be assessed and compared between treatments. The long term goal of this project is to demonstrate the benefits of crop rotation on crop yield and soil health.

Technology First of its Kind in North America — Creating a Commercial Grain Industry

Dr. Vanessa Kavanagh, Alternative Feeds Coordinator, Forestry and Agrifoods Agency

The provincial grain program is helping to establish cereal grains such as wheat and barley as viable cropping options in NL. Climate and soil limitations have led us to look eastward to Northern Europe for new technologies that have been developed for grain cultivation under similar conditions. Through the use of a Murska three-in-one processor, grain can be harvested at higher moisture contents than traditional cultivation systems, thus conquering the problem of a short season that often ends with heavy rains. Grain is treated, rolled and stored at the same time, is ready to be fed in three weeks, and can be kept for at least a year if stored properly. The machine is a great fit for the region and is the first of its kind in North America. In three years almost 500 acres have been seeded and in this year alone grain and straw harvested in the province through the program saved farmers almost \$95,000.

Potatoes — Full Circle Production

Adam Fitzpatrick, Agriculturist, Forestry and Agrifoods Agency

With the development of the Newfoundland and Labrador Nuclear Seed Potato Propagation Facility in St. John's and the Glenwood Seed Potato Farm in Glenwood, the provincial government has developed a full circle, closed loop production system which begins with disease-free plantlets grown in a quarantined greenhouse, free of all pests and diseases. Production continues onto the quarantined farm in Glenwood for tuber multiplication and ends with unique varieties of tubers which have been selected for the distinctive NL



Photo Credit: Resource Innovations Inc.

climatic conditions.

Working collaboratively with federal counterparts, the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency continues to test and develop new varieties of tubers which will help make up the next generation of potato production in this province and the country.

Berry Crops — Commercialization Potential

Deanne Simms, Alternative Crops Coordinator, Forestry and Agrifoods Agency

With the success and continued growth of the commercial cranberry industry in NL, including 300 producing acres and production levels seen as high as 40,000 lbs/ac in 2014, the Forestry & Agrifoods Agency is continuing new cranberry varietal research on high yielding cultivars.

The Forestry and Agrifoods Agency has also partnered with Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC) to look into the commercial production potential of half-high blueberry and lingonberry (partridgeberry), but not as wild stands, as manage cultivated plants in a replicated setting. The plant material was developed by Dr. Samir Debnath (AAFC) in St. John's where he propagated unique cultivars of half-high blueberry by crossing non-native high-bush blueberry with our native wild low-bush blueberry. As well, unique cultivars of lingonberry were propagated by crossing European varieties with our native wild lingonberry. Presently there are 4 research sites across Newfoundland where production data was collected for the first time in 2015. Yields are promising and are showing great potential for commercialization.



Photo Credit: Resource Innovations Inc.

Animal Health — Animal Disease Research to Prevent Economic Loss in Commercial Industries

Dr. Hugh Whitney, Chief Veterinary Officer, Forestry and Agrifoods Agency

Animal diseases can have a significant economic impact on livestock and poultry operations, through the added costs of prevention (e.g. vaccination), control (e.g. selective culling, treatment, disinfection) or loss in economic value of the end product (e.g. decreased milk production or quality, smaller market weights, longer number of days to market, decreased pelt value). To minimize these costs it is important to better understand the diseases, how they spread and how they can

be controlled. Research supported by the PARDP and carried out by the Forestry and Agrifoods Agency, in cooperation with Memorial University, is focused on such important animal diseases as Aleutian disease, Johne's disease, *Klebsiella* mastitis, and foot-pad necrosis.

Berkshire pigs — Niche Production of a Heritage Breed

Crystal-Lynn Anderson Baggs, Market Development Officer and Krista Head, Livestock Specialist, Forestry and Agrifoods Agency

In many Canadian and American areas, specialty pork producers are breeding and rearing the Berkshire breed to directly market to restaurants and other premium outlets as their meat is flavorful and rich, with excellent texture and marbling characteristics. This project is an initial study of the production characteristics of the Berkshire breed for comparison with traditional meat breeds used in our province (Yorkshire, Landrace, Duroc). This small breeding and marketing trial could provide economic benefits to our province's pork producers by offering a new marketable product to the restaurant clientele. It is hoped that the rearing of a Heritage breed will increase food security and sustainability by adding diversified genetics and in the future use of alternative rearing systems.



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Mervin Wiseman Inducted into Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame

The 2015 inductee for the Atlantic Hall of Fame from Newfoundland and Labrador is Mervin Wiseman. He was officially inducted at a ceremony in Nova Scotia this October.

Merv Wiseman's leadership in the agriculture industry has been wide-ranging and influential. His hardworking and innovative ethic has helped transform the provincial fur industry and provided invaluable policy support to his fellow producers.

In 1953, Merv was born into a family of 14 children on Long Island. After completing high school at Grant Collegiate in Springdale, he studied political science at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN), and then graduated in Nautical Science at the Marine Institute Campus of MUN.

Merv's foray into fur farming began when he established his silver fox farm in North Harbour, Placentia. While it is now the largest silver fox farm in North America, it began modestly in 1984 with only two breeding females in Merv's backyard. It is a credit to his innovation and forward thinking that the farm now boasts nearly 3,000 animals. Merv has incorporated stock from across Canada, the USA and Scandinavia and his operation is well-known as an incubator for world class breeding stock which is built upon the pillars of animal welfare, high environmental standards, fur animal research, and fur farming technology. His is the only fox farm in North America to be certified by SAGA Furs in Finland, having met international criteria for animal welfare and the environment.

Merv's contributions influenced tremendous growth in



Mervin Wiseman

the fur industry. During his 16 years as President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Fur Breeders Association the industry grew in value from a few hundred thousand dollars to \$70 million today.

Merv's impact extends beyond the fur industry. As a Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture board member of 25 years, five of which were spent as President, Merv chaired and served on countless committees. He has been, and continues to be, instrumental in developing provincial industry strategies. On a national level, he represented the NLFA on the Canadian Federation of Agriculture board.

Merv's influence and leadership made him the perfect candidate for appointment to the National Agriculture Policy Framework (APF) Review Panel in 2005. On a provincial level, he had extensive influence while serving on the implementation committee for the 5-year federal/provincial APF agreement from 2003-2007, and the appeals committee from 2005-2010. Merv also served on the Canadian Agriculture Stabilization committee, and many other local and national committees and boards.



NLFA congratulates all this year's winners from across Atlantic Canada. (L-R) Mervin Wiseman (NL), Dale Dewar (PEI), Richard (Dick) Huggard (NS), and Stephen Moffett (NB).

Merv is also a founding member of the Canadian Agriculture Human Resources Council (CAHRC), established in 2003. In 2013 he was elected to chair a \$3 million, 3-year project to forecast the supply and demand of skills and labour for the Canadian agriculture industry.

Merv also served as Director of Majestic Marketing Inc., a marketing company for the North American Fur Auction House. During his tenure he established a world class label for

provincially raised silver fox, known as 'Newfoundland Silvers.'

In addition to building his own fur operation and commitment to all facets of the agriculture industry, Merv spent a 35 year career with the Canadian Coast Guard. He spent the last 20 years as a Search and Rescue Coordinator at the Maritime SAR Sub Centre in St. John's. For his work with fishing vessel safety, Merv was recognized with both the Award of Excellence in 2003 and

the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee medal in 2012.

Now retired, Merv is an active outdoorsman, enjoying fishing and snowmobiling. He and his wife Eileen have two children, Chan and Marissa.

Nominated by Eugene Legge for his determined leadership in fur farming and his wide-ranging impact on agriculture in Newfoundland and Labrador, Merv Wiseman is certainly a worthy inductee into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame.

What's Happening in Safety

In January 2015, Memorial University's SafetyNet Centre for Occupational Health and Safety started a multi-phased, multi-year program of research entitled *Agricultural Safety and Research Priorities in Newfoundland and Labrador*. This is the first program of research on agrisafety in the province. Research assistant Lesley Butler began this research and was recently replaced by Ewa Dabrowski, a postdoctoral fellow who comes to us from the University of Alberta. Ewa is being supervised by three Memorial professors: Barb Neis, SafetyNet and Sociology, Zhiwei Gao, Faculty of Medicine, and Adrian Unc, Grenfell campus Boreal Ecosystem Research Initiative.

SafetyNet is doing this research in partnership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Agriculture and with guidance from a multi-stakeholder advisory committee. Funding has been provided by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Memorial University and the provincial Department of Natural Resources. We thank the Federation for supporting this important initiative.

What have we learned since January?

In winter 2015, the research team reviewed existing research on agricultural safety. We focused on research relevant to Newfoundland and Labrador's comparatively small, diverse agricultural sector. We also examined research on reducing the risk of injury and fatality from tractor rollovers. Our reviews identified seven broad agricultural safety issues, listed to the right, relevant to our province.

Agricultural Safety Issues Identified in the Review of Existing Research

1. Agriculture is one of the most hazardous sectors in most countries, with some of the highest reported death and injury rates when compared to other industries or sectors.
2. Farmers and farm workers are susceptible to a variety of illnesses and injuries including those caused by tractors and machinery, animal handling, slips, trips and falls, chemical exposures, exposures to noise, dust and allergens, manual materials handling and repetitive motion, exposure to water and electricity, and psychosocial stressors.
3. Occupational illnesses associated with agriculture include: respiratory diseases from chemical and dust exposures, occupational cancers, pesticide poisoning, dermatitis, musculoskeletal injuries, noise induced hearing loss, and stress and mental health issues.
4. While the most common sources of injury can vary between commodity groups, livestock, machinery and falls are the most important source of occupational injury on farms in the United States where much of the research has been done.
5. The agricultural populations most at risk of injury,

illness and fatality include children, older farmers and migrant workers.

6. Some agricultural commodity groups (such as dairy) have received much more attention from researchers than others such as fur and berry and organic farming.

Between April and July, Lesley interviewed 24 operators and 3 stakeholders. Preliminary findings from our survey indicate that many participants and many of their workers have little to no agricultural safety training; and if they do have training, it is often from other/primary occupations. Most farmers don't wear seatbelts on their tractors, and not all tractors have rollover protection systems. The top four safety concerns identified by participants include working with machinery, chemical exposure from pesticide usage, animal handling, repetitive motions and the associated injuries.

We want to take this opportunity to thank those who have already done interviews for this study. A larger

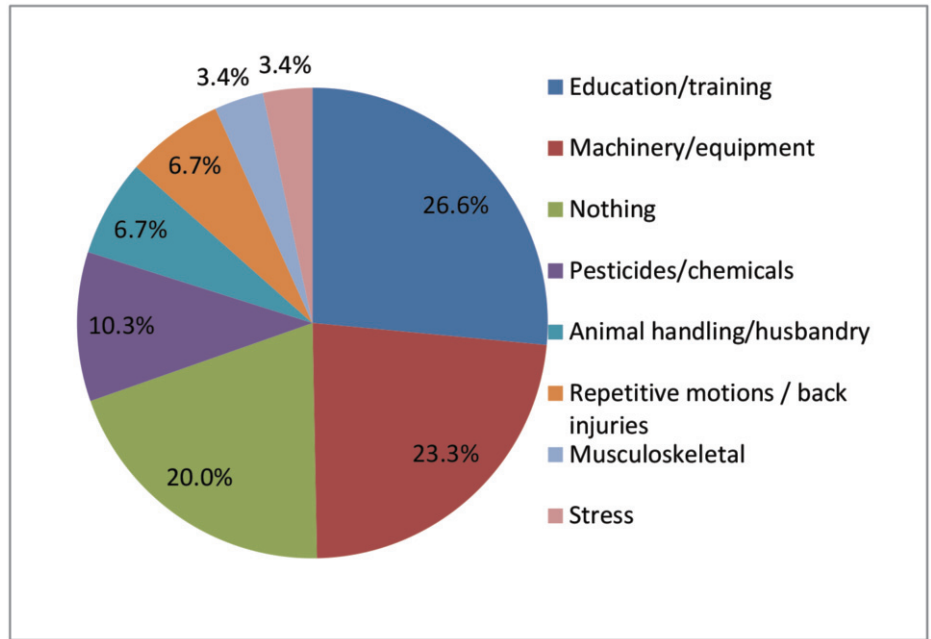


FIGURE 1. Preliminary Results: Operator-Identified Agricultural Health and Safety Issues in Newfoundland.

number of participants will increase our confidence that the findings are representative of the sector as a whole. Therefore, if you have not yet participated and would be willing to consider a confidential interview at a place of your convenience, please contact Dr. Ewa Dabrowska at 709-864-4238 or send an email message to edabrowska@mun.ca and she will get back to you.

The Great Caplin Debate: Caplin For Manure or Caplin For Bait?

We know that there is a long tradition in Newfoundland of using caplin as manure on gardens. But in the nineteenth century, the fishery interests spoke out against that, and wanted caplin reserved to be used only as bait.

"Whereas the catching and taking of the Fish called Caplin, in large quantities, for the purpose of using the same as Manure, is deemed to be greatly injurious to the fish-

eries... after the passing of this Act no Persons... shall... take any quantity of the Fish called Caplin... to be used... for Manure or for any Agricultural purpose whatsoever..." (An Act for the preventing of the taking and using of Caplin for Manure, 15 William IV, Cap III, 8th May 1835).

This Act came about in response to petitions to the House of Assembly. On Wednesday February 4th 1835, James Scapelin and 130 others in Bay Roberts signed a

petition stating that the practice of hauling caplin for manure “has proven very prejudicial” to the success of the cod fishery and is “a rapidly increasing evil.” The following Monday another petition, this time from Port de Grave, submitted by Thomas Martin on behalf of 400 others, made the same complaint. They specifically complained about the fish being taken in large seines. That same day, Mr Robert Pack, the member of the House of Assembly for the area, presented a Bill to prevent the taking of caplin to use as manure. A week later, Thomas Foley headed up a petition from fishermen in Harbour Grace, again seeking protection of caplin for use in the fishery. Robert Pack’s Act was passed in May and was to be in force for two years.

There had been fishing activity in the Conception Bay area since the sixteenth century, and settlement by 1750. Large firms engaged in the fishery were established there from 1750 to the early 1800s. By 1835, the population was steadily increasing, there were more families, and more gardens, and farms were being established. The names associated with the petitions were those of powerful men in the fishery: Robert Pack was the first recorded merchant in Carbonear and by 1850 had the largest firm there; Thomas Foley headed one of the biggest fishery firms in Conception Bay the origins of which dated back to the late eighteenth century. Clearly their interests in this petition were to reserve caplin for use as bait in the fishery and to ban its use as manure for gardens.

The issue of bait versus manure was in the news again in 1851. This time, the House of Assembly invited people in the Harbour Grace District to come forward and answer a set of questions: 1. Are caplin or other bait taken for manure in any part of your district? 2. By what class of person? 3. To what extent? 4. Is such practice, in your opinion, injurious to the shore or other fisheries of the island?

William Hegarthy of Harbour Grace, farmer, said: “All the potato ground of the fishermen is so manured, and cannot be done without. The advantage derived from the practice [using caplin as manure], is very extensively felt by the inhabitants at large, while I am satisfied, from long experience, that the fishery is in no way injured thereby.”

James Bowleyn of Mosquito, fisherman, said: “All the potatoes in the neighbourhood are so manured, and would, in my opinion, be no good without it. I am satis-

fied that the practice is a very beneficial one to the people at large, and to no class more so than the fisherman, while I feel convinced the fishery is not injured thereby.”

Joseph Ryan of Carbonear, Justice of the Peace, interviewed a group of fishermen and reported: “They stated that they had long lived in Carbonear, were married, and had families, and could not maintain these families without the aid of land [gardens] and that land would be no value without manure and that they had no means of procuring any other than caplin manure... that they could not live in Newfoundland by their earnings as a fisherman if not permitted the free use of caplin on their land.” No action was taken.

With Confederation, licences and regulation and international agreements and quotas came to the fishery. And, by the 1970s, “Caplin, like herring, was caught for reduction into fishmeal to be used as animal feed in agriculture and aquaculture industries. Ground-up caplin fed the chickens, cattle, pigs, and, increasingly, the farmed salmon of Europe.” (Rose: 419). A quota was first placed on caplin in 1974 and there is a commercial quota in effect today. But you may still take a few to put on your garden.

Sources: Journal of the House of Assembly 1835, 1851, 1863; George A Rose, COD. The Ecological History of the North Atlantic Fisheries, Breakwater Books Ltd, 2007.

Written by Jo Shawyer for the Agricultural History Society of Newfoundland and Labrador, the mandate of which is to raise awareness of the long history of agriculture in this province.



Next Agriview
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