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Innovative new virtual reality website goes live ***FarmFood360°* now online**

(Guelph) January 16, 2017 – Canadians looking for the real story about their food can get it directly from the source online with virtual visits to farms and processing plants. Farm & Food Care is proud to present its latest national outreach initiative – *FarmFood360°*.

Using 360 cameras and virtual reality technology, the new *FarmFood360°* website gives Canadians the chance to tour real, working farms and food processing plants, all without putting on boots. It's the latest version of the highly successful *Virtual Farm Tours* initiative, which was first launched in 2007.

"Canadians want to know more about their food, but they are also increasingly removed from its production," says Ian McKillop, Chair of Farm & Food Care Canada. "Changing technology also means they are looking for and finding information in different ways.

"FarmFood360° keeps pace with both these factors; it uses modern technology to immerse them right in the process, and address their questions in the most compelling way possible."

Farm & Food Care partnered with Gay Lea Foods Co-operative Ltd. and Dairy Farmers of Canada to add three new tours to the *FarmFood360°* website – a dairy farm with a Voluntary Milking System™, as well as two individual milk and cheese processing facilities. Visitors can access these tours on tablets and desktop computers, as well as through mobile phones and VR (Virtual Reality) viewers. Interviews with the farmers and plant employees involved in each business have also been added.

Both dairy processing facility tours were created in partnership with Gay Lea Foods Co-operative Ltd. Steve Dolson, Chair of Gay Lea Foods, says "Farm & Food Care has created an accessible and practical way for us to open the doors to two of our processing facilities – locations that are usually restricted to ensure food safety and quality."

"Gay Lea Foods is pleased to provide this unique opportunity for Canadians to see how milk from family farms is transformed into the milk, cream and cheese they know and love."

Michael Barrett, President and CEO of Gay Lea Foods, added "we are tremendously proud of our employees and happy to highlight the passion, care and dedication that goes into the wholesome products our company is known for."

As an original partner in the first *Virtual Farm Tours* project, Dairy Farmers of Canada again worked with Farm & Food Care to film a dairy farm using Voluntary Milking System™ in Prince Edward Island. These tours compliment the two dairy farm tours already on the site – featuring farms that use both free stall and tie stall milking technologies.

“Using new technology to bring farm life to Canadians is both exciting and a critical part of food production,” says Wally Smith, President of Dairy Farmers of Canada. “This modern platform is a great way of doing just that. These immersive tours open barn doors to show the passion and care our farmers put into the food they produce.”

This national initiative is being launched with a newly rebranded and interactive website, www.FarmFood360.ca. The site features all 23 farms originally featured on the *Virtual Farm Tour* platform plus the three new virtual reality tours. Additional tours will be added later in 2017.

Farm & Food Care is a coalition of farmers, agriculture and food partners proactively working together to earn public trust and confidence in food and farming. Find out more at www.FarmFoodCare.org.

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