



# Environmental News

## Spring 2016 Issue

This newsletter highlights Farm & Food Care's environmental initiatives. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

### More effective water-use strategies paying off

#### Water Smart Farming Project

As Farm & Food Care Ontario's two-year Water Smart Farming Project wraps up, good news stories from farmers and processors about efficient water use are having shown significant value. Some of the key outcomes of the project have been increased awareness and education around new technology and tools that can reduce water use on farms.

Each water use assessment has been unique. Most of the vegetable washers involved benefited from installing a simple flow meter — called a *rotameter* — on the potable water supply for the main pieces of wash equipment. Rotameters help set flow rates based on the type of product being washed and the amount of soil initially present on the product. This helped operators know exactly how much water they are using. After all, knowing is key to "dialing-it-back".

One of Water Smart's great success stories includes a carrot washing facility that demonstrated how the installation of a simple, low-cost rotameter can significantly reduce water use. In the case of this operation, at the time of the first visit the carrot washer used upwards of 830 litres per minute. Farm & Food Care installed 5 rotameters to reduce the water flow. The amount of water used now is 290 litres per minute, meaning a savings of 540 litres per minute. The facility has reduced their water use by 65%. To put this into perspective, that's enough water to provide 1,270 York Region Residents with water.

Assessments were also conducted on farmers' irrigation strategies with a variety of systems, including Drip, Boom Cart, Standpipe, Stationary, Gun and Centre Pivot. Results indicated farmer's were not wasting water, though better patterns and field distribution was raised as a potential area for improvement.



Irrigation Water Use Assessment

Growers have reported better decision making information from the adoption of equipment such as soil moisture probes, flow meters and rotameters. Irrigators who adopted soil moisture meters into their system are now able to make better decisions about when to irrigate — and for how long. Scheduled to wrap up in October, Farm & Food Care Ontario hopes to communicate more of these good news stories from the Water Smart Farming Project, sharing strategies that have effectively managed water use on Ontario farms.



Flow Meter at a Carrot Wash Facility



## Canada–Ontario DAP on Lake Erie Phosphorus Reduction: Partnering in Phosphorus Control

Farm & Food Care Ontario has been working with the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to develop an action plan to reduce and control phosphorus in Lake Erie. Healthy soils and clean water are vital to the communities in which we live and work, and to the business of farming. The farming community understands that the ecological health of Lake Erie, and all the Great Lakes, is vital to the health of Ontario and its citizens. Ontario agriculture is proud of its role as a global leader in environmentally sustainable farming practices, while continuing to supply increasing amounts of safe, nutritious and affordable food for our growing population.

The issues with Lake Erie are complicated by nature because they involve complex interactions between nutrients and the biological environment. There are several forms of phosphorus which change as chemical pathways interact on the soil surface, inside of the soil and in the lake itself, along with some new invasive species which have the capacity to affect these pathways. These new mussel species keep the nutrients in circulation, increasing the contribution of internal loading which is significant in the “near shore” region.

Farm & Food Care Ontario is supportive of all farm types as they seek to better understand how their particular use of phosphorus can be better managed through the principles of the 4R Nutrient Stewardship — RIGHT SOURCE of plant nutrition, at the RIGHT RATE, at the RIGHT TIME, and in the RIGHT PLACE — to improve nutrient use efficiency and reduce potential nutrient losses to the environment. Farm & Food Care Ontario is supportive of funding in the next policy framework for research and infrastructure in better management of phosphorus. For more information go [here](#).

## Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association's workshops

### Soil Health Workshops

The Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association partnered with OMAFRA and Farm & Food Care Ontario to host workshops on soil health. These workshops were held on March 22, in Manvers, and on March 24 in Batawa. They covered information about improving soil biology, reducing soil loss, building organic matter, cover crops and strip tillage, amongst other topics.

## FLIR Lending Program

Farm & Food Care Ontario is operating a FLIR (heat sensing) lending program. By borrowing and using the FLIR modules it is hoped that farmers will increase their awareness of fire safety, potential risks and prevention. The FLIR cameras come in two types:



(FLIR Modules)

A FLIR Spot Thermal, gun style with a small screen and internal camera card for image storage



A plug-in module for a smart phone or tablet (Apple IOS and Android modules available)

For more information about the FLIR Lending Program, visit:

<http://bit.ly/2gBSAno>

## Upcoming events & meetings

- Environment Advisory Council Meeting, June 15, Guelph
- Breakfast on the Farm. June 24, Shedden, ON
- Wallenstein Feed Mill, July 22

## New in the news

- Ontario farmers have become badgers' unlikely friends: <http://bit.ly/2qxCcpn>
- Farmers dispose of Pesticides and Medications <http://bit.ly/2rjdfRG>
- Protecting Quality of Life for Generations to come: <http://bit.ly/2rAskIA>
- Public consultations on DAP for Lake Erie algal blooms: <http://bit.ly/2rjetMG>

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FarmFoodCare

100 Stone Road West, Suite 202, Guelph, ON, N1G 5L3

Phone: (519) 837-1326 Fax: (519) 837-3209

[info@farmfoodcare.org](mailto:info@farmfoodcare.org) [www.farmfoodcare.org](http://www.farmfoodcare.org)

