



Environmental News

Welcome to the spring 2016 issue of Farm & Food Care's Environmental News. Here we review the work that Farm & Food Care is doing with environmental issues on behalf of our members. If you want any info on our projects, contact mel@farmfoodcare.org.

Great Lakes Guardians Council | Farm & Food Care is honoured to be represented on the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MOECC) Great Lakes Guardians Council. This council was established as part of Bill 66 (the Great Lakes Protection Act) to help identify priority actions, foster collaboration and provide input on Great Lakes priorities. The council includes government staff, representatives from environmental and agricultural NGOs, as well as First Nations leaders. Bruce Kelly attends on behalf of Farm & Food Care, Don McCabe sits in for the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and Dave Bутtenham represents the Ontario Agri-Business Association. The first meeting was held on March 22nd in Toronto (see image below).

Agricultural Soil Health and Conservation Working Group |

Farm & Food Care's Sam Bradshaw is representing Ontario's livestock sectors on a new Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) working group to develop a provincial strategy on soil health.



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April 2016

Volume 3, Issue 1

This newsletter highlights what Farm & Food Care is working on related to farming and the environment. Your comments and suggestions are welcome!

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Agricultural Working Group on Lake Erie Phosphorus |

Farm & Food Care has been elected as the industry co-chair of this OMAFRA working group. The group works with all commodity stakeholders to provide direction and input to OMAFRA and MOECC as government works toward a Domestic Action Plan addressing the issue of Lake Erie phosphorus reduction.

Smart Water Assessments |

Farm & Food Care has been visiting vegetable and other on farm processors to help assess and reduce their water use. Thus far, assessments have succeeded in recommending many cost effective production changes— including the improvement of water re-cycling systems and limiting use of new fresh water.





Farmland Rental Agreements and the Environment | Over 35 percent of Ontario farmland is rented and there is evidence to suggest this land isn't treated with the same long-term soil health commitment as non-rented land. While this has been an on-going issue for decades, land rental agreements and their affect on the environment have been particularly important in light of the recently passed Great Lakes Protection Act. Over the past few months, Farm & Food Care created a resource hub at www.farmlandagreements.ca for landlords and farmer-renters to move the conversation forward. The website includes a discussion checklist, sample lease for download, videos and farmer stories, resources on flexible land rental rates and soil health terms, along with links to other available resources and research.

Environmental Advisory Council | On February 25th, Farm & Food Care's Environmental Advisory Council met to share common concerns across the industry and discuss the work of the Environment Team. We had Dr. Cynthia Scott-Dupree speak on her neonicotinoid risk research and also brought in Natalija Fisher from Environmental Defense to speak about a potential initiative to create funding for on-farm water quality projects. The next meeting will take place after the spring planting season.



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Soil Health Roadshow | We had a blast working with the OMAFRA Soils Team, local Conservation Authorities (CA) and innovative farmers to bring six soil health workshops across the Lake Erie, St. Clair and Southern Huron watersheds last month.

The Roadshow visited Elmwood, Brodhagen, Delhi, Parkhill, Thamesville and Leamington and saw 280 farmers attend in total. Each day started with OMAFRA staff reviewing the foundations of soil health and going through best management practices to address specific soil concerns in the area. Attendees then heard from local CA staff about research projects and funding opportunities. Ontario Soil and

Crop Improvement Association (OSCIA) staff also introduced the Great Lakes Agricultural Stewardship Initiative (GLASI) cost-share program. After lunch, attendees heard from local farmers using minimum-tillage practices and cover crops. Panel and group discussions were then held on various topics, including soil fertility, manure management, cover crops and soil mapping. Videos of the workshops will be posted to the Farm & Food Care Ontario website in the coming weeks.

Farm & food Care would like to thank all those who participated in the Soil Health Roadshow workshops.



Upcoming Environmental Events |

April 7: Farm & Food Care is hosting a 'Community of Practice' meeting of over 100 water researchers, farmers and government staff to collaborate on agricultural water and nutrient issues, finding research gaps and discussing social application.

TBA: We are working with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and the Innovative Farmers Association of Ontario to run a bus tour for government staff to showcase the use of environmental farming practices.