



FarmFood360° initiative

Three new Virtual Reality tours open doors to beef, chicken and turkey farms

(Guelph) November 26, 2020 – Canadians looking to get behind the scenes and learn more about how their food is produced on family farms have three more opportunities available to them now at www.FarmFood360.ca. Three new Virtual Reality Tours filmed last summer on Ontario beef, chicken and turkey farms have been added to the popular website, joining the 15 farm and food processing tours already on the site.

Visiting a farm is a perfect way to connect Canadians with their food and those who produce it; but unfortunately, doing this in person is not always possible. Using 360° cameras and virtual reality technology, the FarmFood360° website gives Canadians the chance to tour real, working farms and food processing plants, all without having to leave their homes or classrooms.

Browsers can access the tours on tablets and desktop computers, as well as through mobile phones and VR (Virtual Reality) devices. An additional 12 traditional videos have just added to supplement the 360° feature tours that include interviews with the farm families, explanations on where their animals live and what they eat and conversations about their day to day chores on the farm. Veterinarians, nutritionists and other experts join the farm families in explaining their roles in caring for animals on these farms.

The new beef tour visits both an Ontario cow-calf farm and a feedlot farm. Rob Lipsett, President of Beef Farmers of Ontario, describes their new online resource as a great way to showcase two primary types of beef farms to the public who might not otherwise have the opportunity to tour a farm in real life. “We’re proud of our farms and our beef farming families. We want the public and our consumers to know how we raise beef cattle responsibly and how our grasslands support and protect the environment. We want our consumers to make informed decisions and feel good about their choice to put beef on their plates. This new tool will open barn doors in a way we haven’t been able to do before.”

The second tour takes people on an immersive experience into an Ontario farm raising broiler (meat) chickens. Videos explain what chickens eat, how they’re cared for and highlights a special program called CFO Cares Farmers to Food Banks that encourages farmers to donate fresh meat to local food banks. “Due to the strict biosecurity practices put into place on-farm to protect our birds from outside diseases, we’re often unable to take visitors into our barns for personal tours. This new virtual reality chicken farm tour helps show our industry’s commitment to quality and transparency,” said Ed Benjamins, Chair of Chicken Farmers of Ontario.

In the turkey tour, the farm family takes guests through both their poult barn (young birds) and their grow-out barn for more mature birds. They talk about their life as a farm family and the daily routine on their farm. Brian Ricker, Chair of Turkey Farmers of Ontario, said that consumers often don’t know very much about turkey farming, because there are only about 160 farmers in the province. “We’re proud of our industry and our farmers who work hard year-round to put turkey on the plates of Canadian consumers,” Brian said. We are excited about this new immersive program that will showcase turkey farming to a much broader audience.

Already in 2020, the tours have received more than 2.5 million views from 750,000 users. This is a 300 percent increase compared to the same time period in 2019 and reflects Canadians turning online for their education and entertainment needs.

This project was funded, in part, through the AgriCompetitiveness program of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal, provincial, territorial initiative.

-30-

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.FarmFood360.ca or www.FarmFoodCareON.org.

The Beef Farmers of Ontario (BFO) represent 19,000 beef producers in Ontario by advocating in the areas of sustainability, animal health and care, environment, food safety, and domestic and export market development. BFO's vision is to help foster a sustainable and profitable beef industry, and have Ontario beef recognized as an outstanding product by our consumers.

Chicken Farmers of Ontario (CFO) represents more than 1,300 family run farms that collectively ensure Ontario consumers enjoy a reliable supply of safe, healthy, high quality, Ontario-grown chicken. For more information visit ontariochicken.ca.

Turkey Farmers of Ontario (TFO) represents approximately 160 turkey farmers across the province. We are farmer-run organization working to promote animal care and an efficient innovative marketing system for the industry to make turkey a healthy and regular choice for Canadian consumers. Visit www.turkeyfarmers.on.ca for more information.

For more information:

Kelly Daynard, Executive Director, Farm & Food Care Ontario; kelly@farmfoodcare.org; 519-837-1326, extension 224

LeaAnne Wurmli, Director of Communications, Beef Farmers of Ontario; leanne@ontariobeef.com; 519-824-0334 extension 230

Kathryn Goodish, Senior Director, Communications and Stakeholder Relations, Chicken Farmers of Ontario; Kathryn.goodish@ontariochicken.ca; 289-288-4201

Emily Haramule, Marketing & Communications, Turkey Farmers of Ontario; emily@turkeyfarmers.on.ca; 519-575-1885