



FarmFood360° VR Experience

Two new virtual reality tours take visitors to Ontario berry and dairy farms

December 4, 2023 (Guelph) – Canadians interested in learning more about how their food is produced can now access two new farm tours at www.FarmFood360.ca. The 2023 video releases will allow Canadians to immerse themselves in a 360 experience on berry and dairy farms. These virtual reality tours will be added to the already extensive list of farms that Canadians can visit at www.FarmFood360.ca and explore from the comfort of their own homes or classrooms.

Using virtual reality technology and 360 cameras to create a dynamic, interactive experience allows Canadians to tour real, working farms and food processing plants without putting on boots or biosecurity clothing.

The first of the new VR tours takes visitors to two Ontario berry farms: Howe Family Farms in Aylmer and Thames River Melons at Innerkip. In the videos, Howe family members and grower Alex Chesney explain how strawberries, raspberries and blueberries are grown. This tour was funded in partnership with Berry Growers of Ontario (BGO) and the Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC).

“So many people enjoy Ontario berries but haven’t had a chance to see how our farmers are able to get them from their fields to our tables,” said Victoria Eastman Buma, Research and Promotion Coordinator from BGO. “We are excited to have had the opportunity to partner with FFCO and be able to offer that experience to Canadians.”

Peter Katona, Communications and Industry Relations Manager for the Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC) explained that the berry VR project was partially funded through AAC’s FarmFood360 program. The program supports up to half of the costs of completing a VR project for AAC member organizations. Katona said, “The intent of the program is to apply the most innovative and current examples of transparency available, to help earn public trust in food and farming.” He added, “We’re just delighted that BGO used this funding to complete the new berry tour and hope other members will apply for similar funding in 2024.”

The second new virtual reality experience takes visitors to the Brown family’s dairy farm near Paris, Ontario. The tour showcases a dairy farm with milking robots that allow cows to choose when they want to be milked. Farmers Doug, Ashley and Steve Brown take visitors on a journey to learn more about their herd of dairy cows. The Brown family shares stories about life on an Ontario dairy farm, from caring for their calves to managing their farm and to producing the high-quality milk Canadians enjoy every day. Ashley Brown also received FFCO’s Agri-Food Champions Award in 2022, which recognizes individuals who have taken the initiative to help engage consumers about agriculture in the province.

“We are thrilled to partner with Farm & Food Care Ontario to feature a local dairy farm and a farming family spanning three generations,” said Mark Hamel, Vice Chair at Dairy Farmers of Ontario and Board Member at Farm & Food Care Ontario. “The Brown family exemplifies the commitment it takes to be a dairy farming family through their advanced management methods and implementation of technologies. We hope this new content helps Canadians learn more about Ontario dairy farms and inspires the next generation of dairy farmers.”

This project is also supported, in part, by the AgriCompetitiveness program of the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal, provincial, and territorial initiative.

Since 2016, more than 25 Virtual Reality farm tours have been filmed, with the Ontario berry farm and an updated Ontario dairy farm tour being the most recent additions to the extensive virtual reality collection. Each year www.FarmFood360.ca attracts over a million visitors eager to learn and see what Canadian farms look like.

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Agricultural Adaptation Council (AAC) is an industry-led organization that stimulates growth and opportunity for Ontario's agriculture and food industry through the delivery of funding programs, facilitating connections, and developing partnerships. www.adaptcouncil.org

Berry Growers of Ontario (BGO) represents blueberry, raspberry, and strawberry growers by funding industry promotion, research activities and educational events for the benefit of its members. BGO is active in all facets of the berry industry from wholesale and retail to pick-your-own and on-farm markets on behalf of its approximately 200 members. BGO also works closely with the Agribusiness value chain with current farm gate value for fresh Ontario berries estimated in excess of \$40 million annually. (www.ontarioberries.com)

Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) is the marketing board for the largest sector of Ontario agriculture. Our mission is to provide leadership and excellence in the production and marketing of Canadian milk for a dynamic, profitable growing dairy industry. Ontario's 3,273 dairy farmers, their families and employees are proud to produce high-quality milk for Canadians. (www.milk.org)

Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO), 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.

