

For immediate release

Niagara agricultural advocate honoured
Food & Farming Champion Award presented to Henry Swierenga

April 11, 2024 – (Elora) In front of a large crowd in Elora, Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) presented the annual Farm & Food Care Champion Award today to Henry Swierenga of Niagara.

The Food & Farming Champion Award has been presented annually since 1999, in recognition of an individual or group's significant commitment to public outreach and support for Ontario's farming community. The presentation was part of the agenda at FFCO's conference, a day-long program for the Ontario agriculture industry, featuring speakers and collaboration around growing public trust.

Henry was nominated by the Ontario Federation of Agriculture (OFA) in recognition of his continued support and promotion of agriculture, with letters of support submitted by Chris Mullet Koop, President of the Niagara Federation of Agriculture (NFA) and Joanne Fuller of OFA. His award was presented by Bruce Christie, past chair and board member of FFCO, with assistance from Ontario Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Lisa Thompson.

Henry is described by nominators as an energetic and enthusiastic supporter of Ontario agriculture and food, both through his long career at OFA and through his volunteer work at events including Breakfast on the Farm, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair, the Lincoln County Fair and Niagara Farm Day. Henry is a dependable presence that makes events like these possible and is currently serving on the organizing committee for the 2025 International Plowing Match and Rural Expo in Niagara.

In the NFA's letter of support, Chris Mullet Koop said, "Henry initiated and participated in many agriculture education events and projects. In Niagara, Henry was responsible for the production of four award-winning children's agriculture videos. He participated and helped organize our annual farm education day at the Lincoln County Fair and continues to help at our Niagara Farm Day in May. Henry is a true advocate of the agriculture industry and, although retired from the OFA, still volunteers in the organization and implementation of several agriculture-related events and programs."

Minister Lisa Thompson said, "It's a pleasure to recognize a dedicated advocate like Henry, who has consistently, with OFA and now in retirement, supported initiatives geared towards increasing agriculture & food awareness. Through his ongoing commitment, Henry shines a light on how Ontario's agriculture and food industry continues to grow, meeting both domestic and global market demand, while promoting the very best of rural communities."

Former colleague Joanne Fuller added, "We are so lucky to have Henry's passion, knowledge and experience still advocating for Ontario farmers, which makes him a perfect recipient for the Champion award." She added, "Henry's continued commitment shines through when he volunteers for every Breakfast on the Farm that Farm & Food Care organizes. I know when I am signing up to help that Henry will also be there."

Farm & Food Care Ontario is a coalition of farmers, agriculture and food partners proactively working together to ensure public trust and confidence in food and farming. For more information visit, www.FarmFoodCareON.org.

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Photo caption: L-R Past chair and board member Bruce Christie presents the 2024 Food & Farming Champion Award to winner Henry Swierenga, alongside the Hon. Lisa Thompson, Minister of Agriculture Food & Rural Affairs, and FFCO Chair Crispin Colvin.

For more information:

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