



Proudly Presenting **AGRICULTURE**



Have you ever been asked a question about food or farming that you didn't know how to answer?

Read a media report that wasn't accurate?

Been asked to volunteer at a local event to talk food and farming or to host a farm tour?



This brochure was made to provide tips and advice to help you with experiences like these.



Why is this important?

Less than two per cent of Canadians live and work on farms, making it important for those of us working in the industry to explain what we do. We have a lot of good news to tell the other 98 per cent of the population and any opportunity to share is worth it.

Being a proud agricultural advocate can take many forms. Anytime that you are talking about food and farming to people who have not yet heard the good news stories, you are being an ambassador for the industry. Telling people about your experiences, answering questions, making presentations, talking with the media, hosting tours or engaging on social media are all things you can do.



Getting the message out

In 2023, 93 per cent of Canadians acknowledged they knew little or nothing about food and farming. The need to bridge the gap between the farm and the consumer continues to grow. Here are some important messages to focus your efforts.

Canadian farms are important

- Canadian farmers and food producers are world leaders in providing safe, high quality food.
- Canada is a world leader in food safety, animal care and the environment.
- Family farms make up 97 per cent of Canadian farms and remain the backbone of Canadian agriculture.

Safe food starts on our farms

- Hundreds of different products are grown and raised on Canadian farms. Farmers provide abundant, wholesome, safe food.
- As farmers, we are very aware of the importance of providing consumers with safe, high quality food. After all, farmers are consumers too.
- Examples: Quality Assurance programs and Livestock Medicine courses.

Farmers are committed to animal care, 365 days a year

- Farmers are hardworking, honest professionals who believe in the humane and responsible care of animals.
- Caring for animals is a major part of our livelihoods. This takes long hours and a genuine interest in animals.
- Examples: Codes of Practice, third-party on-farm audits, legislation.

Farmers are active environmentalists

- Farmers live, work and play on our farms and how we treat the environment affects us and our families directly.
- The goal is to always leave the land in better shape for the next generation that will be farming it.
- Examples: Environmental Farm Plans, Grower Pesticide courses, buffer strips, wildlife habitats and more.

How to communicate?

When you're talking with someone...

Be yourself. Talk about what you know. Use examples from your farm or experience. Keep a pen and paper handy and jot down their name and offer to find answers that you are unsure of.

Be positive and proud. Also be patient with the questions you're asked.

Be prepared. Think about common and not so common questions you might be asked about your farm or type of farming. Be prepared with answers.

Keep it short and simple. Avoid using industry jargon, acronyms and explanations that are too technical.

Put it into perspective. Compare the past and present or draw parallels to everyday urban life to help people see a clearer picture.

Talk to kids. Encourage children to ask questions and provide answers that both they and adults can understand.

Respect the opinions of others. Avoid preaching or lecturing. It's about conversations not necessarily conversions.

Show you care. Make sure people understand how much you care about the topic and your farm or business before you get into detailed explanations.



When making a presentation...

Know your audience. Plan your activities and messages to suit who you're talking to.

Pick a message. Make your presentation memorable with key messages. If you're talking to students, think about what kids will tell their parents when they go home.

Remember your purpose. What are three things you want the audience to remember.

Don't try to cram too much in. The biggest challenge in agricultural outreach is to streamline messages and information. Remember, we can't give people a lifetime of farm experience in a 10 minute presentation.



When you're working with the media...

Keep up to date with farm stories in the news.

These stories can often generate questions or interview requests.

Know who you are talking to. Ask them questions too to get a sense of what they know about the topic.

Avoid doing an interview until you are prepared. Offering to return the call or setting an appointment allows you to collect your thoughts and facts.

Respect deadlines. A missed deadline is a missed opportunity.

Be honest, direct, brief and concise.

Ensure you have the latest facts. Don't guess. Follow up with facts you didn't know or information you didn't have.

Remember that there is no such thing as "off the record".

Build relationships with local media.

Keep in touch and offer story ideas. Refer media to Farm & Food Care Ontario (www.FarmFoodCareON.org) with questions you can't answer.



When you're running a farm tour...

Choose your audience. Farm tours are excellent learning opportunities for students, youth groups, reporters and government officials (but different audiences require different focuses).

Promote a positive image. Be proud of who you are and what you do. Keep your facilities clean and in good repair. Be conscious of what people may see or take pictures of.

Only speak on what you know. Offer to find answers or refer questions you're not sure about.

Make it relevant and understandable. Talk in terms that your visitors will understand and use examples that they will find relevant.

Make it memorable. Remember that for many visitors, this may be their first (and only) opportunity to see a farm or meet a farmer. What do you want them to remember?



When you want to do more...

Distribute and promote agricultural resources in your area. Visit www.farmfoodcareon.org to browse its online resource catalogue and distribute copies of resources to local businesses or libraries.

Give a presentation. Speak about farming to a classroom or a local group like a service club. Farm & Food Care can help.

Volunteer. Sign up to participate at your local fall fair or other public events such as the Canadian National Exhibition, the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair or Breakfast on the Farm.

Attend a Farm & Food Care Speak Up training workshop or media training session. Learn more about how to represent food and farming effectively.



Top 10 tips for successful communications:



- 1 Be positive. You're proud of your industry so show that to your audience.
- 2 Know who you are talking to and what their questions or concerns are.
- 3 Be prepared. Keep current with issues in the media.
- 4 Use easy to understand words and explanations. Not acronyms or jargon.
- 5 Provide comparisons that your audience can relate to.
- 6 Use examples from your farm or business whenever possible. "On my farm" is the best possible start to an answer.
- 7 Show you care – about your topic and about their questions.
- 8 When answering a question, "I don't know" is a valid answer. Refer them to someone else when appropriate.
- 9 Invite discussion, avoid debates and confrontations. Everyone is entitled to their opinion.
- 10 Remember that you might be the only farmer or person in agriculture that they ever meet. Make that impression memorable.

On behalf of Farm & Food Care Ontario and its members, thank you for your dedication and interest in representing agriculture and talking about what you do. Your contributions to talking to Canadians are appreciated and valued. We hope this brochure inspires you and provides helpful tips to ensure success in your agricultural advocacy work.



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