

The Farm Journalist

NEWSLETTER OF THE CANADIAN FARM WRITERS' FEDERATION

[HTTP://WWW.CFWE.CA/](http://www.cfwf.ca/)



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Food miles: What does it mean for farmers?

By Al Scholz

The use of the term “food miles” is growing in popular media - but what does it mean for Canadian farmers? The majority of western Canadian food is exported – with some years as high as 80%. Saskatchewan’s high volume of production is the most dependent on the export market and the least reliant on the US market, which means a greater percentage of the harvest goes off-shore compared to the rest of the country. Saskatchewan foods travel across the globe to almost every country in the world. Is this sustainable? How do we know?

The term “food miles” was first used by a UK report in 1994 to highlight the environmental and social impacts caused by the increasing distances that food was travelling. It has been widely adopted by local food movements and actively used to promote the widespread growth of initiatives such as farmers’ markets.

Regardless of whether the term is a valid measure, “food miles” is being used more and



How far has your food travelled? Photo by Amelia Johnston

more by buyers, retailers and consumers when making purchasing decisions. It’s even beginning to appear in government policies. Interestingly, “food miles” is commonly used as a surrogate measure for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from food sources. The implications for exporters is a potential reduction in access to overseas markets due to perceived higher costs, carbon taxes based on freight tonnage, and higher landing fees.

In reality, the food miles debate is about much more than GHG emissions from

transportation. The transportation component of the global food chain is only a small factor in total energy use – ranging from 10-14% at most. “Food miles” are part of a wider debate about globalization versus localization – and about sustainable systems of production and consumption.

New Zealand is a leader in using “food miles” to their advantage in the export market. This was a necessity given their large food production capacity relative to a small population. Today, this remote nation successfully exports both

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Annual meeting goes virtual

By Hugh Maynard, Secretary-Treasurer

IFAJ 2011 in Guelph/Niagara Falls is going to be so full of exceptional things that CFWF has had to take exceptional measures to squeeze in its 2011 annual meeting and awards banquet.

First, the annual meeting will be held on **Tuesday, August 30th at 3:00pm EDT via conference call**. The reason for this is that there were very few options within the schedule of the IFAJ Congress to hold a session just for Canadian participants and the CFWF board felt that it was more important to use that space for the awards program presentations (see below).

Being a conference call, the annual meeting will be limited to official business such as the minutes, financial statements, elections and annual reports. We require a minimum of 20 participants (members) from at least 4 of the 6 affiliated associations for quorum so please entice one or two of your colleagues to join us (you can have an AGM party in your office – free beer for anyone who seconds a motion!) The venerable Senate Report (the report, not the senators themselves) will be presented during the awards program.

If you wish to participate in the annual meeting via teleconference, please register at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2011CFWFAGM>

All documentation and instructions for the call will be sent to you via email.

Secondly, the awards banquet will be – exceptionally for this year only – an awards breakfast. It will be held from 8:00 – 9:00 am in the Oakes Grand Ballroom at the Marriott by the Falls Hotel on **Saturday, September 17th, 2011**. The awards presentation will be preceded by the Senate Report (can we take that stuff so early in the morning?) and followed by a presentation from the Manitoba folks who will be hosting the 2012 CFWF conference.

Looking forward to seeing you there!



Felicity F. Feinman hails from Oakville, Ontario where she lived until she was 17. She went to high school in Toronto, at the Etobicoke School of the Arts. As a dance major, Felicity fully intended to become a professional dancer until Grade 12 happened. She changed her mind right around the time

that everyone was applying to universities. She's always had a passion for writing and decided to apply to Carleton University for Journalism. She was accepted! Felicity spent the past year in Ottawa, writing for Carleton's student newspaper and getting used to university life. Felicity has never lived on a farm before or even known someone who owns a farm. However, she is very excited to learn about country life this summer, because she'll be working full-time for the CFWF! Felicity will primarily be organizing the CFWF Awards and looks forward to getting your emails at awards@cfwf.ca.

NOTICE OF CFWF ANNUAL MEETING

The CFWF Board of Directors invites all interested members to participate in the 2011 Annual Meeting to be held via conference call on:
TUESDAY, AUGUST 30th, 2011 at 3:00pm EDT

In order to receive documentation and instructions, please register at:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/2011CFWFAGM>

AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Adoption of the minutes of the 2010 annual meeting
5. President's Report
6. Secretary-Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement
7. Reports (no presentations, available only as documents)
 - Awards Program Report
 - IFAJ
 - Regional Associations
12. New Business
13. Board Elections

Honourary Chair of IFAJ 2011 announced

Former Canadian Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Lyle Vanclief, has been named the honorary chair of the 2011 International Federation of Agricultural Journalists Congress.

“Few Canadians know agriculture as well as he does – from operating a farm to setting national agricultural policy – or have his appreciation for Canadian agriculture and the role of the agricultural media,” says Owen Roberts, IFAJ co-chair.

Vanclief served as a Member of Parliament from 1988 to 2004. During that time he was Opposition Critic for Agriculture, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, Chairman of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture, and Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.



Food miles cont'd

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commodities and processed food around the world.

The agricultural industry in New Zealand has proactively built a global reputation for sustainable production systems and environmentally friendly marketing abroad. The industry has been proactive in using life cycle assessment (LCA) in researching the environmental footprint of their food production. This demonstrated that selected New Zealand food products can be exported to Europe and North America with lower greenhouse gas emissions than locally produced products.

The knowledge and awareness LCA provided helped New Zealand farmers make adjustments to the production mix of crops and livestock – in order to produce and export what is proven to be more “sustainable” environmentally, economically and socially.

Leaders in Canadian agriculture are beginning to use the LCA tool as a means to measure the environmental and social impact of the food chain – from the tillage of the land, to management of inputs and positioning for export. While there may be an increase in local markets for some farmers,

the majority of Canadian crops and livestock will still be destined for export. The good news is that the Canadian agricultural industry can use “food miles” to its advantage, for both local and global markets, by being proactive.

Like New Zealand, Canadian farmers need to show that even though the food miles may be high, some products can still be the best overall environmental choices for customers around the world.

This article was originally published at CFBMC.

Changes in ECFWA

By Clare Illingworth, ECFWA President

The Eastern Canada Farm Writers' Association annual meeting took place in April, welcoming in the new board, saying farewell to a long-time volunteer and a host of professional development opportunities.

In April we said goodbye to board member Jane Robinson.

As a retiring director, she is leaving a legacy that includes longest-running newsletter editor. Jane breathed life into the newsletter, which for many years was the main avenue for ECFWA communication with members. She is also credited with brainstorming its name, *The Nib*. Other highlights of Jane's tenure include the national awards program, building it to the event that we see today. She worked tirelessly to develop the categories, generate sponsorship and manage entries.

Her attention to detail and enthusiasm for farm writers could also be seen in her leadership roles on ECFWA events and CFWF conferences including Niagara, Windsor and Belleville.

It is quite possible that Jane is the benchmark to beat for consecutive year's service in ECFWA and is leaving us with some big shoes to fill. We extend our sincere gratitude to Jane and wish her all the best with the IFAJ event, which is now the direction she is taking those exceptional organizational skills.

ECFWA member and director Kathie MacDonald will be joining Jane at the IFAJ congress in Ontario this fall as the 2011 bursary winner. Kathie has been part of the rural Ontario landscape her whole life, growing up on a family farm and enjoying a 30 plus year career in the agricultural and

rural sector. She is currently the communications manager for the Rural Ontario Institute and coordinator of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program (AALP).

The travel bursary is handed out annually to an ECFWA member and covers up to \$700 towards the expenses to attend the national conference. In recognition of the bursary, Kathie will be active throughout the conference using social media tools to share her experiences. Post-conference, we will see her articles in *The Nib* and *The Farm Journalist*.

Event sponsors for the ECFWA AGM were the Canadian Wind Energy Association, Dairy Farmers of Ontario and Syngenta.



The 2011-2012 ECFWA Board of Directors are Past President Kelly Daynard, Ontario Farm Animal Council; Newsletter Editor Claire Cowan, Grain Farmers of Ontario; Secretary/Treasurer Andrew Campbell, Fresh Air Media; Syngenta; First Vice President Sarah Andrewes, Hill & Knowlton; Second Vice President Karen Dallimore, Words for Hire; President Clare Illingworth, Director Lianne Appleby, Hybrid Turkeys; Director Terry Stevenson, Southern Co-operative Services; Director Kathie MacDonald, Rural Ontario Institute; Director Christina Franc Qu'anglo Communications. Photo by Anne Howden-Thompson

Technology fair features important tools

By Terry Stevenson, Southern Co-operative Services

The 2011 edition of the Eastern Canada Farm Writers' Association's Annual Meeting featured a new "Technology Fair" as part of its agenda.

Fresh Air Media is focused on educating and informing people about agriculture, social media, technology, and how they all fit together. Andrew Campbell from Fresh Air Media showcased some of the latest technology available in today's marketplace, including the Apple Mac Pro and iPad. Campbell advised members to avoid automatically selecting what's new when choosing new technology. "Do your homework by talking to your fellow colleagues in the industry," says Campbell. "Find out what they are using and what works best for them. By taking these steps you can narrow your selection down to the right piece of technology that will work best for you," Campbell added. For more information visit www.thefreshair.ca or call 226-678-4004.



Kyle Maw's booth featured the many applications and opportunities that are available for building and designing company or personal websites. Kyle was recognized during the formal part of the annual meeting for building and designing the highly successful IFAJ 2011 website (www.ifaj2011.com). "There are all kinds of options for websites and blogs out there," says Maw. "You really need to know what you want to look like and most importantly how much you want to spend before seriously building your website," added Maw. Kyle is also available to review existing websites and blogs, provide advice and is happy to offer suggestions on how they might be improved. For more information visit www.kylemaw.com or call 519-490-4477.

University of Guelph marketing and commerce student Bruce Sargent heads up **Farm Boy Productions**, based in Guelph. Sargent's company focuses on producing videos for

agricultural groups and organizations. One of Farm Boy Productions biggest accomplishments to date was producing a specialty video for Amber Marshall, star of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporations "Heartland," television series. This video featured clips of children who took part in a special riding day hosted by Marshall. "Although we specialize in video production, our company also does website design and graphics including those for specialty brochures," says Sargent. For more information visit www.FarmBoyPro.ca or call 519-362-2662.

Fearless Logic which was represented by Christina Franc based in Ormstown, Quebec is a company that as noted in their mission statement: "Is a project aimed at providing a centralized and free resource for learning about the web."

"We do a lot of work with community organizations and volunteers showing them how to use tools and provide expertise and knowledge in developing their websites," says Franc. Fearless Logic also provides seminars and workshops to match the needs of the individual group and their specific goals in developing their website. "We offer community groups an excellent first start building and the best use of their website," added Franc. For more information visit www.fearlesslogic.org or call 877-782-6456 Ext. 706.

Representing the photography industry were Darren Lachambre and Ron Hewson from **Henry's** in Waterloo. Darren and Ron answered members' questions regarding digital photography and video production. One of their highlights was showcasing the new Olympus Pen "Mirror-less" camera which is smaller and lighter than a traditional SLR camera yet produces the quality of a traditional SLR camera. This Mirror-less camera will also shoot quality video in a 720 p which will work for most application users may have. Henry's also provides group or individual training sessions and has complete photography course and seminars available to the public. "Our goal is to get the right camera in the hands of the consumer," says Lachambre. For more information visit www.henrys.com or call 519-884-4035.

All fired up in Alberta

By Alexis Kienlen, AFWA

About 28 members of the Alberta Farm Writers Association converged in Lethbridge from June 1-3 to participate in a tour called “All Fired up about Wind and Water”. The day’s events started at the International Wind Energy Academy housed at Lethbridge College. The group toured the energy academy and learned about the power of wind energy. From there, the group travelled to the Lethbridge Irrigation Development Centre where they looked at irrigation pivots, and a demonstration irrigation canal.

Lunch was held at Broxburn Vegetables and Café, where participants dined on greenhouse vegetables, wraps and homemade pie. This was followed by a tour of the greenhouses. Participants then took the bus to Perry Produce Potato Farm, where farmer Harold Perry spoke about growing potatoes for Frito-Lays. The trip to a wind farm was cancelled due to rainy weather, so the day concluded with a steak supper at Indian Hills Golf Course.

The final day of the tour consisted of a visit to the University of Lethbridge’s Alberta Water and Envirosciences building. Participants talked with researchers who were studying watersheds, fungicide biological controls and the effects of toxic chemicals on fish. Thanks to tour organizer Jim Hahn, Janet Kanters and Ron McMullin for their efforts in organizing this tour.



ACFWA meets the best of Nova Scotia

By Allison Finnamore, ACFWA President

After spending a year getting our feet on the ground, the Atlantic Canada Farm Writers' Association met June 16 and 17 in Truro, N.S. for our annual meeting and tour.

The tour focused on Nova Scotia's strong horticultural and farm market sector and we saw some of the regions' biggest and best growers, marketers and sellers. As luck would have it, many of them also happened to be related.

Glen Jennings is a fourth generation farmer near Masstown, N.S. and operates a 12,000 layer operation powered by wind energy. He harnesses the power of the Bay of Fundy and has opened up the premium, eco-friendly market.

David Jennings is Glen's cousin and lives just across the road. He and his wife Annette are primarily dairy farmers, but a few years ago, David decided to start a cranberry bog. To reach the bog, we travelled across the top of a centuries-old dike, built by the Acadians, the 17th century French settlers, to separate the ocean from the land. With rain plaguing much of the region for the last several weeks, it was a mucky, slippery drive. David and Annette are learning all they can about growing their

early black variety of cranberries, and have found the variety a popular one at the nearby Masstown Market.

The Masstown Market was the next stop on our tour, owned by David and Glen's uncle Eric Jennings and managed by their cousin, (Eric's son) Laurie.

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Dr. Kenny Corscadden, the Industry Research Chair for Farm Energy Conservation at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, discusses his research with ACFWA members Andy Walker, Wayne Riley, Kim Waalderbos and Alberta Farm Writer Member Janet Kanters, who participated in the east coast tour. Photo by Allison Finnamore

ACFWA cont'd

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Eric said he started the market in 1969 so he could sell his produce to neighbours. The market has expanded 18 times in the last 42 years, he said, and now includes a bakery, restaurant, gift shop, nursery, fish market, deli and seafood takeout. Laurie has continued the family's entrepreneurial spirit and continued to expand, adding a fish market and take out earlier this year. The Masstown Market is also a major employer in rural Nova Scotia with a staff of about 210 employees.

Our final stop of the day was at the Nova Scotia Agricultural College, where we met three of Canada's agricultural research chairs -- Dr. Kenny Corscadden, the Industry Research Chair for Farm Energy Conservation, Dr. Vasantha Rupasinghe, Canada Research Chair in Fruit Biochemistry and Bioproducts and Dr. Rajasekaran R. Lada, Founding Director, Christmas Tree Research Centre. The tour wrapped up with dinner hosted by Dr. Richard Donald, vice-president of

Research, Extension and Outreach at NSAC.

On Friday morning, our tour continued with a visit to Curtis Millen's strawberry farm. With 200 acres of day-neutral berries, the berries form flowers under any day length and keep growing as long as temperatures are suitable. Millen is one of the first to get Maritime-grown strawberries into grocery stores and he does it by bringing in nearly 200 migrant workers to handpick the fruit. He's created a high quality, reliable, niche product and gets paid a premium.

The current slate of officers -- Allison Finnamore as president, Andy Walker as vice-president and secretary and Wayne Riley as treasurer -- agreed to serve another term. Carmel Vivier will serve as New Brunswick director and newsletter editor, Kim Waalderbos will serve as Director for Nova Scotia and Gwyn Bellefontaine as Director for Prince Edward Island. Janet Kanters, who also attended the ACFWA tour and annual meeting, was named Director from Away.



Masstown, N.S. farmer Glen Jennings, second from the left, talks about his wind-powered layer farm to members of the ACFWA during their annual tour. From the left are Gwyn Bellefontaine, Jennings, Janet Kanters of the Alberta Farm Writers (who happened to be visiting area during the ACFWA tour), Andy Walker and Wayne Riley.

SPARK crew fires up for summer

By Samantha Beattie, SPARK

SPARK is looking forward to another exciting spring and summer at the University of Guelph, with a dynamic team made up of new and veteran members.

Samantha Beattie, the newest addition to the SPARK team, is a fourth-year International Development student from Hamilton, Ontario. She is a long distance runner on the varsity cross-country and track and field team.

Joey Sabljic, a Guelph Ontario native and fourth year English major, is entering his third year as a SPARK writer. When not helping to spread the word about Guelph research, he plays guitar, classical piano and considers Nutella to be “God’s currency.”

Johnny Roberts, originally from Chatham, Ontario, is graduating shortly with a major in theatre studies and a minor in geography. He keeps himself busy with a mixture of intramural sports, such as volleyball, as well as stage and film acting. Music is also an important part of Johnny’s life; he cites the GMOs and the Black Keys among his favourite bands.

Natalie Osborne will be working part-time this summer with SPARK. She resides on a farm just outside of Guelph and is in her fourth year in the Biomedical Science. She is also embarking this summer on a neuroscience undergraduate research project.

SPARK’s very own video production expert, Bruce Sargent, comes from the small town of Enniskillen, located north of Oshawa. He’s in his third year of marketing management at Guelph. Bruce owns an agricultural media production company, Farm Boy Productions, which is featured in the Ontario government’s 2011 Summer



Company Yearbook.

“This latest SPARK team has a unique combination of experience and a diversity of academic interests,” says Owen Roberts, Director of Research Communications and SPARK Editor-in-Chief. “SPARK will be partnering with our various supporters and stakeholders who are strategically aligned with the University of Guelph’s research interests.”

SPARK’s summer activities include submissions for agricultural publications such as *Ontario Grain Farmer*, the *Milk Producer*, *Greenhouse Canada*, *Ontario Beef* and the *Ontario Farmer* commodity magazine group, as well as the *Guelph Mercury*, the University of Guelph *Research* magazine, the U of G-OMAFRA partnership *Yearbook*, Equine Guelph newsletter, and specialty publications such as the International Barcode of Life newsletter and Shared Hierarchical Academic Research Computing Network (SHARCNet).

Additionally, the video production division, SPARK*Air, will be hitting the road this summer, visiting University of Guelph campuses and research stations, creating videos highlighting the latest agricultural research coming out of Guelph for Farms.com, as well as a variety of other video initiatives as they arise.