

Farm & Food Care Ontario Year in Review

By Amber Anderson, Communications Manager

Supported by members like Egg Farmers of Ontario (EFO), Farm & Food Care Ontario (FFCO) brought together egg farmers, food producers, agribusinesses and their urban and suburban neighbours in ways that were both educational and entertaining in 2022. FFCO especially appreciates the continued support of EFO's continued platinum membership as members are foundational to FFCO's successes, and allow us to continue working to build public trust in Ontario agriculture. EFO board member Janelle Cardiff serves as Second Vice-Chair of the FFCO Board of Directors.

2022 was a monumental year for FFCO and our partners as the organization celebrated the 10th anniversary of FFCO's founding and made its return to in-person events in a significant way.

Breakfast from the Farm

Partnering with the Paris, Grand River, and Milton Agriculture Societies, three walk-through Breakfast from the Farm events were held on fairgrounds, where visitors had a chance to see farm animals and equipment, and talk to farmers and ask questions about where their food comes from. Each event had good weather and strong attendance from local communities. In each case, visitors enjoyed breakfast and left with bags packed with pancake mix, maple syrup and valuable information about agriculture in Ontario.

Farm Tours

2022 marked FFCO's return to on-farm tours. The six tours included a tour of horticultural operations with a migrant-labour focus for Toronto-based food-influencers, to a grains-focused tour for dietitians, to four tours for culinary students from colleges across the province. Participants were surveyed on their knowledge about and perception of Ontario agriculture before and after each tour. When asked about their impression of Ontario agriculture before their tours, 68 per cent responded good or excellent, while the post-tour survey had 94 per cent responding their impression of agriculture was good or excellent. Survey results also showed that participants went from 62 per cent stating they think the food system in Canada is going the right direction to 82% agreeing that it is.

Public events

Many public-facing events resumed in 2022. FFCO hosted an 'Ask-a-Farmer' video booth at the CNE, greeted friends at Canada's Outdoor Farm Show and spent the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair sharing FarmFood360 virtual tours with the public. FFCO also worked with the Royal to host the first in-person Food & Nutrition Forum since 2019. Public events offer an opportunity for FFCO to facilitate invaluable conversations between farmers and their urban and suburban neighbours about how farms in Ontario make food for us all.

Source Local

In 2022, in partnership with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, FFCO undertook an initiative called Source Local to highlight the importance of buying local food, flowers and fibre. Fourteen county-level federations took part with projects ranging from 'Source Local' night at drive-in theatres, to producing a colouring book, to 'meet-a-farmer' night, to trail signs and video production for online distribution. Provincially, Source Local hosted four pop-up food-truck events in Thunder Bay, London, Ottawa and Milton that enabled farmers to talk directly to consumers about the importance of looking for local when buying food,.

Digital outreach

Digital outreach is a strong component of FFCO's work.

Faces Behind Food continues to highlight the diversity of people and career opportunities within the Canadian agri-food system on Facebook and Instagram. Profiles were posted twice per week, with 56,000+ likes, share and comments on the across accounts. In 2022, numerous egg farmers as well as staff working at processing and grading facilities were profiled, and FFCO is always looking for new people to feature.

FarmFood360.ca now hosts 25 Virtual Reality farm tours, with the addition of three new tours in the fall of 2022. The new tours, featuring white beans going from field through processing, potatoes going from field to potato chip, and behind the scenes at a broiler-breeder farm and a broiler hatchery, offer new glimpses of agriculture behind the scenes, which Canadians can access from the comfort of their own homes.

The Real Dirt on Farming 5th edition was published in 2020, with both paper and digital editions. In 2022, FFCO started using paid search ads to amplify the reach of the website. For example, when looking for information on GMOs, visitors were directed to ads promoting www.RealDirtonFarming.ca, to access the information they are looking for.

FFCO and AgScape continued a successful partnership in 2022, offering 12 livestreamed field trips reaching an audience of 72,944. These field trips gave viewers, including students and teachers, the chance to connect with farmers in real-time. FFCO and AgScape will continue to offer these tours throughout 2023 and are looking for farmers interested in hosting them.

Training and workshops

FFCO continues to offer media and Speak Up training and commodity-specific updates, with 62 sessions taking place in 2022. Other virtual training sessions provided advice on how to protect farm properties from unwanted visitors.

In 2021, FFCO expanded its courses to offer virtual training for first responders being called to livestock transportation emergencies including truck rollovers. In 2022, 21 sessions were hosted for 665 first responders across Ontario. With financial support from many partners helping make this possible, the project has had great success.

The course covers factors that are important to the decision-making processes for accidents involving livestock trailers, including trailer design and the implications for extrication points, animal behavior, laws and regulations, euthanasia protocols, and how to develop response teams.

TO LEARN MORE

To learn more about all of FFCO's initiatives, visit www.FarmFoodCareON.org and subscribe to the monthly e-newsletter. Comments and questions can always be directed to FFCO staff directly at info@farmfoodcare.org