



ANNUAL REPORT 2010



According to Agriculture Agri-food Canada, **75% of our farmers will retire within the next 15 years and 60% of these do not have a named successor.** The aging and retirement of this generation will mean the disintegration of the social fabric of rural communities and the long-term stewardship of our farmlands, unless there are young and new farmers to take their place.

Yet, over the last two decades, it seems the disincentives and challenges facing new farmers have become overwhelming and prohibitive. In the 15 years preceding the 2006 Census of Agriculture, **Canada lost 62% of its farmers under the age of 35.** Just 2% of the Canadian population farms. With under 30,000 young farmers in Canada today and the fastest pace of decline in our history, fewer and fewer farmers will be producing our food in the future.

**We need young farmers,
we need new farmers,
we need more farmers.**

Message from the Chair

I look back at the last year as Chair of the Farm Start Board with a bit of awe and wonder at the maturing of the organization. We have worked hard to ensure that the growth and refinement of our financial management systems has kept pace with the growth of our operating budget. Our auditor is thrilled (as thrilled as auditors get!) with the accuracy and clarity of our transactions. We've finalized many operating policies and an operations manual has been developed to assist staff in the daily management of the organization. Staff members have grown into capable managers of programs and people. New board members have been recruited to bring special expertise to the governance of FarmStart.

As we expand the successful model of the McVean Incubator Farm and our other programs to other areas, we are constantly developing new partnerships and learning new ways of operating. At the same time, we must always keep in mind the goals of the exploring, beginning and start-up farmers in our programs and on our lands. It is our job to help them realize their potential without getting caught up in the red tape that is so much a part of running an organization. Their dreams can become reality if we help them explore those dreams with a healthy dose of education and reality.

It has been my pleasure to serve this term as Chair of FarmStart and I look forward to continuing our journey together.

*Janet M Horner
Chair, FarmStart*

Message from the Executive Director

At FarmStart - we believe that if we want to have successful established farmers 10 years from now, we need to be reaching, supporting and investing in not only the children of our existing farmers, but also prospective, new-to-farming start-up farmers today!

We have begun to witness a strong resurgence of interest in healthy food and farming. We work with passionate and committed new farmers from all backgrounds who are setting their sights on farming. Increasing numbers of young people from farm and non-farm backgrounds, new immigrants and second-career farmers are striving to build entrepreneurial, economically viable and ecologically sustainable farm enterprises.

There are many challenges facing these new entrants, yet there are also new opportunities. And **they bring skills, connections and passion that can lead to innovation and renewal.**

The farmers that we work with are interested in learning from their elders, but at the same time creating new ways of doing business: integrating old ways with new technologies and approaches to effectively manage their crops, animals and farms, to connect with customers and create meaning and value for their products. The growth of consumer demand for ecologically produced, artisanal and locally-grown foods has created a space for small and mid-scale farmers that can seize this opportunity by producing differentiated products and shortening their food value chains.

We are finding that municipal, regional and provincial governments, not-for-profits and communities across Canada are beginning to realize the potential of these new farmers, in terms of food security, economic development and rural renewal.

We are discovering and building connections with active partners and communities across North America who are interested in how to best help these new farmers find their path into agriculture. While we have continued to solidify and expand our programs and services, we have also begun to work with partners across Ontario and Canada, to explore how to best replicate, adapt or deliver our programs and services for new farmers.

This work has been exciting and complex, challenging and rewarding. And, we have been learning as we go. On the following pages you will find a summary or some of our work.

I have begun to describe our work as 'strategic interventions' that help to make the road to a farming career a little more accessible, not so hard, and a little less lonely. We don't make it easy, nor do we hold anyone's hand. We believe new farmers need to be resourceful, brilliant, entrepreneurial, hard working people if they are going to succeed in farming. However, we don't believe that that they should have travel the road alone, and that small amounts of timely and effective physical, financial and skills building resources along with support, networks and encouragement can help them to handle or overcome the bumps they will encounter along the way.

We don't know where this will lead, but we do know that something is happening: in our courses and farm tours, on our incubator farms, and our farmlink website, as well as in the many other new farmer training programs, internships and communities across North America. Something so inspiring, exciting, and real. Something we hope will bring long-term renewal and vibrancy to our farm communities and food system.

The seeds for a new generation of farmers have taken root and we are thrilled to be able to help them grow!

Christie Young
Executive Director, FarmStart

At right: McVean Farmers, 2010





2010 in Review

Farm Start-up Program

The incubator farm model continues to take root.

McVean Farm in Brampton

- 21 new farmers dug in to their farm businesses in 2010.
- Secured 10 additional acres owned by the TRCA for next season.
- Completed thorough cost accounting and set prices for the farm operations to enable sustainability.
- Saulis Tribinevicius took over from Jeff as the McVean Farm Manager. (Jeff Boesch, left us to start his own farm business in 2009. <http://cedardownfarm.ca/>)
- 2 'Open Farm Days' and Saturday Markets brought over 600 people from the local community and beyond to learn about the exciting things happening at McVean.
- The first Annual McVean Farm Harvest Table took place in September with 100 people sitting down to share a delicious 4-course meal with our farmers on the farm.

New FarmStart Incubators

We have received calls about starting incubator farms from communities across Canada and we continue to share what we are learning.

We have also started to explore several new incubator farm projects. Next season we are aiming to establish a new incubator at Heart's Content Organic Farm in Brant County (on the bike path between Hamilton and Brant!).

We are excited to be working with Ella and Richard, Heart's Content owners, as we explore how to partner with a private landowner to establish and run an incubator farm. We are also excited to expand our programs and work with new partners in Brant County.



Training and Resources

700 people attended our courses, workshops and farm tours in 2010.

- 11 different workshops in our **Business Development Series** (Including: *The Dirt on Soil*, *Pasturing Pigs and Poultry*, *Season Extension*, *Intro to Sheep*, and *Salad Bar Beef and Relationship Marketing* with ecological farming guru **Joel Salatin** of **Polyface Farms**).
- **McVean Farm Incubator Workshops** - Including *The Dirt on Soil*, *Cover Cropping*, *Tools and Supplies for Market Garden Efficiency*, and *Direct Farm Marketing*.
- 10 **Skills-Building Farm Tours** offered across Ontario (a tour as well as a focus on at least one practical hands-on skill including: small scale honey extraction, crop rotation, building cedar rail fencing, post harvest handling)
- *Exploring Your New Farm Dream* courses in Kitchener, Brampton, Toronto, Owen Sound, and Guelph.

FarmLINK

Exploring how to help connect farmseekers with farmland owners

www.farmlink.net

- Now over 700 registered users.
- An average of 62 contacts per month have been made between farmseekers and farmland owners.

Succession support

- Launched the first edition of *Accessing Land for Farming in Ontario* - a new farm succession and land tenure guide (will be available in print and as free download on the FarmStart website).
- *So, You're Thinking of Buying a Farm?* Workshops in Toronto and Guelph.



Looking Ahead to 2011

What we are working on...

- **“Digging into Farming - Your Options and Next Steps”:** Designed to follow our Explorer Course, this course will provide prospective farmers an introduction to farm planning, assessing their farm vision, as well as support accessing available resources and mentors. Pilots will take place in Oct 2011 in Guelph, Kingston and TBD.
- **New Farmer Training Day** at the Bring Food Home Conference October 27th at Trent University.
- **Ontario ‘Crop Mob’ Network Pilot:** a way of providing potential farmers with opportunities to visit and work on farms and connect with new and experienced farmers (by doing some group work projects that need doing!)
- **Expanding Farmer-to-Farmer Training and Mentoring Opportunities** with the Ecological Farmers of Ontario and other partners.
- **Coaching Project for Non-related Farm Succession:** We will be launching the pilot in the fall, including workshops and coaching for participants seeking creative and unconventional solutions to farm transfer outside of the family. Will focus on building communication, expectations and relationships to help promote successful farm transfers.

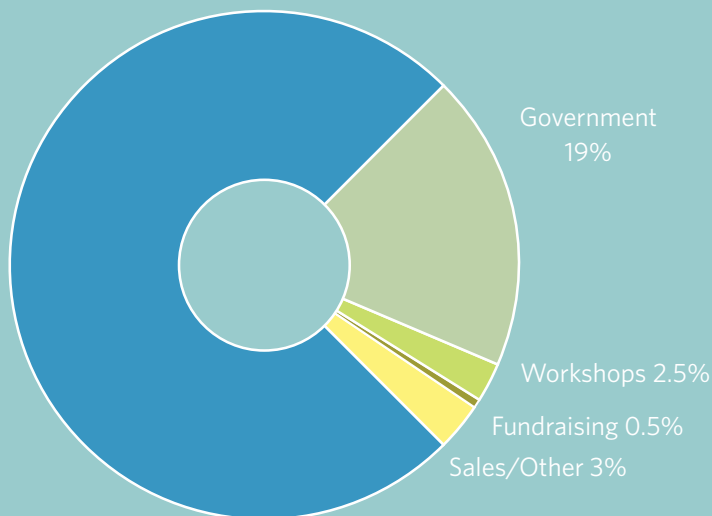


2010 Financial Report

Revenues and Expenditures

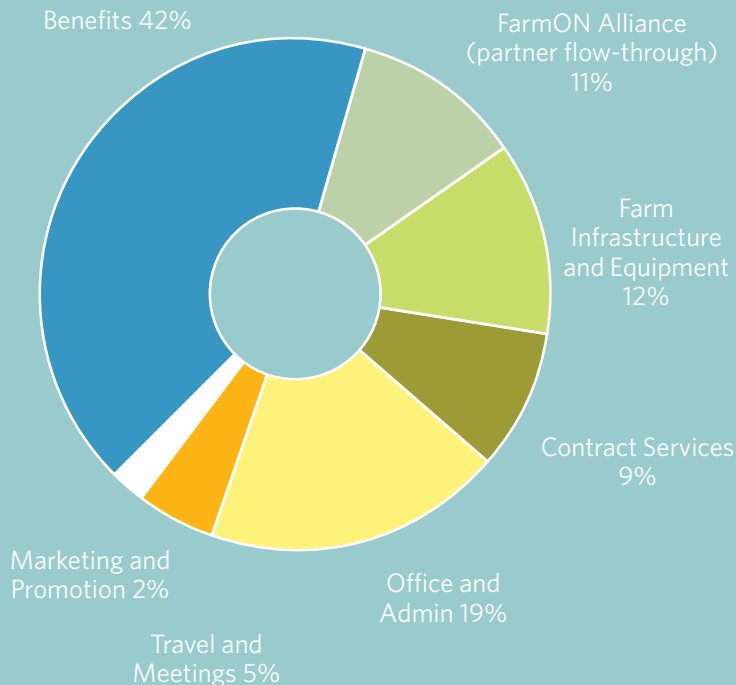
Revenues: \$718,825

Foundations 75%



Expenses: \$717,537

Salaries and Benefits 42%





Partners

Funding Partners



Community Partners

Ecological Farmers of Ontario
Afri-Can FoodBasket
Canadian Organic Growers - PWW
Community Environmental Alliance
Organic Council of Ontario

Staff

Christie Young, Executive Director
Melissa Watkins, Director Programs and Operations
Sridharan Sethuratnam, FarmStart-Up Program Manager
Saulis Tribivnicus, McVean Incubator Farm Manager
Monika Korzun, New Farmer Coordinator
Alexandra English, Training and Resources Program Manager
Kelsey Rideout, Outreach and Communication Intern
Laurie Thomas, Farm Succession Program Manager
Cherie Bauman, Administrative Assistant

Board

Janet Horner, Chair
Andre Hueniken, Treasurer
Ricardo Ramirez
Karine Jaouich
Cyndi Alton

In 2010, Tarrah Young decided to step back from the Board to focus on her growing farm business: GreenBeing Farm. Tarrah continues to work with FarmStart to provide training for a new generation of farmers by leading many of our workshops and courses.

FarmON Alliance Partners

Everdale
Eat Local Sudbury
Just Food
Farms at Work – A Project of Tides

Contact

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