



FACILITATING, SUPPORTING, AND ENCOURAGING A NEW GENERATION OF FARMERS

MAY 2009

FARMSTART NEWS



Looking for Land? Try Speed Dating

We're thrilled to see the [FarmLINK Ontario](#) program taking off after its launch last fall! At the heart of FarmLINK is an on-line **matchmaker tool** to help farmland owners connect with new farmers looking for land.

Aware that succession planning requires more than a website, we organized our first live matchmaking workshop "**Lucky in Land?**" Held at Guelph's *Bookshelf eBar* last month, the workshop attracted 12 farm owners and 15 farm seekers.

A panel of farmers, including [Caitlin Hall](#), [Val Steinmann](#) and [Henry Bakker](#) began the night by discussing their creative land tenure arrangements - from squatting and renting to looking to purchase a farm. [OMAFRA's](#) Peter Coughler then introduced tools and resources for thinking through succession and sound land tenure arrangements.

The evening concluded with "**Speed Dating**" between the farm owners and farm seekers. Each seeker had 3 minutes to speak with an owner before the bell rang, signalling them to move on to the next farm owner. The 3-minute "dates" provided just enough time for participants to determine a possible match.

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It's Spring at McVean!



What's exciting at FarmStart's incubator project at the historic **McVean Farm** in Brampton? As it enters its second season of operation, its 5 farmers have multiplied to 13! Seven enterprise operations are now working the 50-acre farm including 5 market gardeners, 1 beekeeper, and 1 mushroom grower. Additionally, 6 test plot farmers are developing their skills and markets on quarter acre plots.

Eager to get crops in, some McVean farmers were able to start seeding peas and other spring greens as early as April 18th. They have developed great marketing ideas for the usual vegetables, as well as many not commonly grown commercially in Ontario, such as Bitter Gourd, Okra, Green Garlic, and Bengal Lentils.

We also have two exciting major infrastructure improvements that will benefit all participants. A **BCS 732** walk-behind tractor with rotary plow, tiller, and sickle bar mower attachments (designed for the small-scale commercial market gardener) will allow everyone to manage the soil and cover crops on their own plots.

Feeding each farm's individual system and serving as the main irrigation line is 2,000 feet of 4-inch aluminum pipe and fittings. This new pipe will go a long way toward creating efficient irrigation, which is so crucial to market gardening. We look forward to laying it out next week!

... Looking for Land? continued.

The event was an absolute hit with many finding it quite valuable. We certainly look forward to holding more of these workshops throughout the province this coming fall!

Please feel free to visit the site where you'll find over **50** farm listings and **80** profiles of new farm seekers. We've been delighted to hear from a number of folks who have already found matches through FarmLINK for this growing season!

FarmLINK was developed in partnership by [FarmStart](#), [Ontario Farmland Trust](#), and [Kawartha Heritage Conservancy](#).



FarmON Alliance Launch!

Thanks to a generous Ontario Trillium Foundation Future Fund grant, FarmStart is very excited to announce the launch of the **FarmON Alliance**. FarmON is a provincially coordinated alliance of organizations with a mandate to *encourage the development of local food systems through the support of emerging, ecologically-oriented farmers*.

The grant is being administered by FarmStart in collaboration with regional partner organizations including Eat Local Sudbury, the Everdale Environmental Learning Centre, Just Food Ottawa, Kawartha Heritage Conservancy, and the Union des Cultivateurs Franco-Ontariens. The Alliance will be addressing issues of **farmland access** and **succession**, as well as **knowledge transfer, training** and **resources**.

Regional coordinators will work closely with existing organizations such as CRAFT, COG, and EFAO to help coordinate, facilitate and deliver workshops producer groups and networks. They will also provide a voice on new farmers issues at the provincial level.

A major event early next year will be a provincial **FarmON Conference**. The conference will offer both production and policy development workshops.

If you would like to become involved in a producer group, or have suggestions for events you would like offered in your area, please contact your regional coordinator.

North: Dave Banbury farmon@eatlocalsudbury.com Eat Local Sudbury

Southwest: Harris Ivens growingfarmers@everdale.org Everdale

East: Robin Turner arobint@gmail.com Just Food Ottawa

Central: Anna Petry apetry@kawarthaheritage.org Kawartha Heritage Conservancy

Francophone: Shannon Kavanagh skavanagh@lavoieagricole.ca UCFO

"Academic Programs in Sustainable Agriculture are Proliferating"

The *School of Environmental and Natural Resource Sciences* at Sir Sandford Fleming College Campus in Lindsay, Ontario, is developing a 1-year program in **Sustainable Agriculture**.

Pending final approval, the program will launch in January 2010. The curriculum will focus on the development of skills and knowledge for new and beginning farmers, including farm planning, business operation, small farm viability, diversification, and the identification and development of new, niche markets.

Winter and fall semesters will take place in-class, but the highlight of the program will be a growing-season internship. The program is designed to attract beginning farmers.

The emergence of this program is part of a growing recognition among North American colleges and universities of the need for applied learning for a new generation of ecological farmers. For more information about this exciting development, check out *Inside Higher Ed's* recent article "[Academic programs in sustainable agriculture are proliferating.](#)"

Ecological New Farmers Conference

Thanks to everyone who attended, presented and volunteered at our recent *Ecological New Farmers Conference*, presented at Toronto Botanical Gardens in partnership with Everdale's **Farmers Growing Farmers** Program. The event was a real success attracting almost 150 people!

The conference brought together new and aspiring farmers for workshops such as Crop Planning

for Market Gardeners, Raising Mixed Livestock, and Successes in Urban Agriculture. The Keynote, by Daniel Brisebois of [Tourne-Sol Cooperative Farm](#) in Quebec, explored how a creative team-based approach to farming can build a more diverse and economically stable farm business.

We hope to make this an annual event, so please let us know if you have any [feedback or ideas!](#)

Hoop Houses for Extending Your Growing Season

~ Online web seminar ~ May 7th at 1 pm EDT

Register at <http://www.attra.ncat.org/webinars2009/hoophouses>. Attend *Hoop Houses* to find out if this low-cost tool, which many farmers across the country are using, will work for you. Hoop house crops often produce larger, higher-quality yields. Crops can be ready for the market earlier, helping capture a higher price. Hoop houses can also extend growing seasons, sometimes creating a yearlong crop.

CBAN Volunteers Needed - Ottawa

Approximately 4 hours every 2 weeks at Headquarters for admin assistance and GM-Free sugar consumption project.

Volunteer researchers also needed for issue briefs.

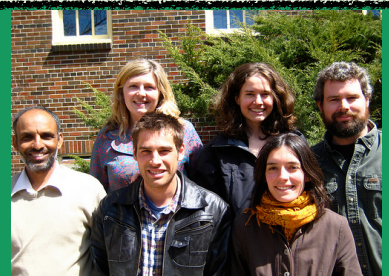
Inquire: **Lucy Sharratt, Coordinator**

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FarmStart putting down Roots!



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FarmLINK Ontario Coordinator

Henry Bakker

Training and Resources Coordinator

Jeff Boesch

McVean Farm Manager

Keturah Knapp

Administrative Manager

As of Dec. 2008, FarmStart has new roots! We've set up an office at the Orchard Park Office Centre of Ignatius Farm in Guelph. Stop by and visit us at Suite #172 - 5420 Highway 6 N. in Guelph.

10 Web Marketing Tips for Farmers

Are you looking to build a marketing plan for your new farm but unsure where to begin? Overwhelmed by everything you don't know about internet marketing? Check out **Switch Marketing's** new eBook: [10 Web Marketing Tips for Farmers](#). Authors **Andrew Angus** and **Christie Young** walk the reader through marketing basics of developing a logo, building a website to more advanced strategies like running an online store. The e-book also provides a wealth of links to useful online sources to help you grow your marketing strategy from the ground up.

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