



# Perth County Federation of Agriculture

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## Agriculture's social license – a complex challenge

**By Keith Currie, President,  
Ontario Federation of Agriculture**

The recent Ontario trial for criminal mischief with farm animals in transit reminds us all that farmers and our everyday practices are constantly under scrutiny. Our customers and special interest groups have never been more engaged with how farmers grow crops and raise animals. Raising farm animals using safe, humane practices is never negotiable and Ontario farmers follow strict codes of practice. But public pressure on approved farming practices reminds us that social license must be earned each and every day.

Social license has been defined as the privilege to operate with minimal restrictions by maintaining the public's trust for doing what is seen to be right. Farmers have traditionally been held in high esteem and trusted to produce the food we eat. But with each generation, Canadians are increasingly disconnected from food production. This growing gap in basic understanding of where food comes from and how it is grown and raised creates ongoing challenges in maintaining the trust that is essential for social license.

The OFA advocates every day for Ontario farmers' ability to operate responsible and sustainable farm businesses. Building public trust and a sustainable farming sector is one of OFA's key objectives. Obviously, we need to ensure that our farm businesses operate within accepted practices. The challenge is to achieve

general agreement on what constitutes "acceptable" practices. There are a lot of special interest groups working hard to convert the public to their own idea of acceptable farming practices.

Make no mistake – farmers need to step up every day and clearly demonstrate they are farming in a humane and sustainable way. But government needs to step up and help establish and promote an attainable bar and defend the farms that reach or exceed that bar. The judiciary must protect responsible farmers from costly legal challenges that weaken public trust and weaken our competitive position. The recent Barton report to the federal government singled out food production as a major growth area, citing opportunities to export food to developing markets. Indeed, being blessed with abundant resources and skills, we have an obligation to

ensure we feed our growing world.

Frankly, we won't get there without a clear and concerted effort to recognize a balance of sustainable and humane farm practices that are also competitive. We need our governments to work with us to educate the public in food production and build the trust in our industry that is now flagging.

Trust begins with awareness of farm practices that are deemed just and humane. This awareness then leads to an acceptance of those farm practices, at least by the majority. Then farmers and the entire agri-food chain must clearly demonstrate that they are meeting or exceeding those standards – every day.

This is no simple task. But it is a necessary task. Our citizens and others around the world need food. We need to ensure they trust us as the source of that food. We must strengthen our social license. ♦

## Plans underway for the annual Harvest Gala

Plans are underway for the Third Annual Perth County Harvest Gala. Tickets are now available. There are also sponsorship opportunities available. To order tickets or enquire about sponsorship email perthcountyfedofag@gmail.com.

Any proceeds from the evening are used to support Ag Education in Perth County. In the last two years Perth Federation has supported I-Farm Perth County, Huron Perth Agriculture & Water Festival, and Perth 4-H.

The PCFA Agriculture Recognition Award will be presented at this event. If you know of any individual, couple, family, or business that has made a contribution to agriculture in the county consider nominating them for this award.

The PCFA Continuing Education Scholarships will also be presented at this event.

More information on the Recognition Award and Scholarships can be found at: [www.perthcountyfarmers.ca/pcfa](http://www.perthcountyfarmers.ca/pcfa).

PERTH COUNTY  
*Harvest Gala*  
**Celebrating the Excellence of Agriculture and the People Who Make It Happen**  
Saturday, November 18, 2017  
Stratford Rotary Complex  
6pm Social • 7pm Dinner  
\$60 per person / \$450 table of 8  
For More Information Please Contact:  
[perthcountyfedofag@gmail.com](mailto:perthcountyfedofag@gmail.com)  
A PROJECT OF THE PERTH COUNTY FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURE

Perth County Federation of Agriculture  
**DIRECTORS MEETING**  
**Wednesday, June 14**  
**8:00 p.m.**  
Rostock Hall Board Room,  
Rostock