



# Perth County Federation of Agriculture

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## Ag takes on misinformation in boot camp style

**By Peggy Brekveld, Vice President, Ontario Federation of Agriculture**

Food aid turned back in Africa because it may contain GMO crops, test plots destroyed in protest of GMO research – these are just two examples of what has happened in the past because of fear of scientific research and food. Fear is often rooted in facing the unknown. Farmers regularly embrace scientific research and technology of all kinds, because we live with it and we see the benefits. We understand that just as we want our medical profession to use all the advantages of 21st century knowledge, we also want to be able to benefit from current scientific knowledge that helps us feed our soils, our animals, our families and the world. The challenge is to bring more of that scientifically proven knowledge to the non-farmer, building their trust in new technologies and to agriculture itself.

This is why an international group of farmers, technology bloggers, scientists, researchers and others concerned with misinformation about agriculture recently came to Guelph to participate in a Boot Camp on Public Trust in Agricultural Technology. The boot camp conference covered updates on countering anti-technology messages and the importance of educating about food and farming, and the technology used in the industry.

The challenge is real. While myth-busting and debunking makes for big

entertainment these days, media isn't debunking myths or correcting misinformed consumers on our agri-food sector. We see celebrities and self-proclaimed experts establishing themselves as authorities on farming technology. By spreading mistrust in science through misinformation, public trust in farming, agricultural research, and our food production system is eroded.

The boot camp conference focused on communications strategies and tactics for confronting the anti-agriculture technology campaigns. OFA was at the table to learn from panelist speakers and engage in discussion. There are roles for OFA and for farmers, roles as simple as posting pictures of your farm in action, and perhaps an explanation of why you use the technologies you do.

The conference was also the venue for the first Canadian screening of the film, *Food Evolution*, which

documents the anti-science movement and its messages. The film will be publicly available in late June and is highly recommended.

Myths and misinformation about agriculture and farming practices are widespread and eroding public trust. Public opinion that is negatively influenced against science can threaten the tools we rely on to produce safe and affordable food. This is a growing issue worldwide. By addressing public trust in agriculture technology, the boot camp conference shared new ideas to address public misinformation, energized conference attendees and demonstrated that our industry has strength in numbers.

As farmers, we all need to take a more proactive role in explaining our science and our technology to a public who simply don't understand it. Only through understanding can we build trust.◇

## 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 and Huron County Federations of Agriculture**

## JOINT MEETING

**Wednesday, July 19**

Dinner: 6:00 p.m.

Meeting: 7:00 p.m.

**Brodhagen Community Centre**