

Ontario Agricultural Sustainability Coalition (OASC)



Ontario Farmers Look for Change from Ministers

Guelph - The Ontario Agriculture Sustainability Coalition (OASC) and Ontario farmers are looking to this week's meeting of federal, provincial and territorial (FPT) Agriculture Ministers for agreement on revised business risk management programs to sustain Ontario's farming and food industry.

"OASC has been telling our governments that Ontario farming is in crisis and at a crossroads" said Bette Jean Crews, President of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. "Our governments need to act now to sustain Ontario family farms and our local food system."

"In consultation with farmers, our coalition has developed practical and bankable programs to address long term sustainability as well as their short-term needs." said Wilma Jeffray, Chair of Ontario Pork. "It is critical that our changes to AgriStability and an AgriFlex program to enable the new Business Risk Management Programs are implemented now to help our farm businesses."

Farm income forecasts released recently by Statistics Canada show a national farm income loss of over \$164 million. Ontario is looking at a farm income loss of half a billion dollars in the coming year. A recent national survey also shows that the majority of Canadian farmers are dissatisfied with the current AgriStability program.

"The numbers clearly disprove what Ministers seem to believe about the farm sector. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada analysts note that the crop and livestock sectors are expected to continue downward trends. To make matters worse, they add that program payments will decline due to weaker reference margins", said Curtis Royal, President of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association.

"Even AAFC analysts have told us the current risk management programs do not work under the current market conditions" said Bette Jean Crews. "That is why the OASC is calling on the July 7 and 8 meeting of FPT Ministers to immediately address this situation by financially supporting the tools Ontario farmers have developed to cope with the external market factors that are driving down prices."

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